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DRAMATIC WORKS

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THE DRAMATIC WORKS
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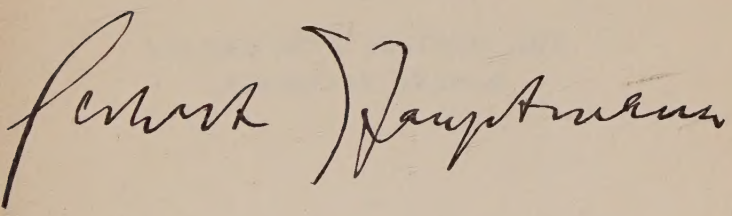

VOLUME NINE:

FLORIAN GEYER
VELAND

THE DRAMATIC WORKS
OF
GERHART HAUPTMANN

(AUTHORISED EDITION)

VOLUME NINE: HISTORIC AND
LEGENDARY DRAMAS

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FLORIAN GEYER

A TRAGEDY OF THE PEASANTS' WAR

HISTORICAL INTRODUCTION

The background for Hauptmann's stirring tragedy is provided by the so-called Peasants' War of the years 1522–25, itself in part an outgrowth of the turmoil arising from the conflicts of the protestant Reformation. (It will be recalled that Luther's celebrated theses were nailed to the church door in Wittenberg on All Saints' Day, 1517.) However, the war as such had little or nothing to do with religious dissension, although the peasants, as they were in rebellion against all princes, and hence also against the princes of the church, were mostly in sympathy with the protestants. Their very genuine and long-standing grievances were almost wholly economic, and the Peasants' War was only the culmination of a whole series of uprisings, the first of which had occurred over fifty years before, in 1461. It was in the uprising of 1502 that the term *Bundschuh* (i. e. "laced boot," see p. 40) was first employed, the peasants at this time erecting a boot upon a pole in lieu of a flag or standard. Plundered and robbed on every hand, taxed beyond endurance, the victims of a changing social organisation which deprived them more and more of any effective right of protest, the peasants revolted again and again, first here and there in small groups, which were easily defeated by the

local princes, but finally in a vast outburst of fury which it took the united effort of the aristocracy to quell.

Beginning in southern Swabia in 1522, the peasant rebellion spread widely and rapidly and had considerable success. Noteworthy among the leaders were Thomas Münzer (p. 22) in Thuringia, George Metzler and Florian Geyer in the Odenwald, Wendel Hippler (p. 66) in the Hohenlohe region, and above all Götz von Berlichingen (p. 18). Aid also came to them from the banished Duke of Württemberg, Ulrich (p. 198), who sought to regain his dukedom by espousing the peasant cause. It was in 1525 that the "twelve articles" (p. 17) were drawn up and sent abroad, arousing great enthusiasm; and early in this year the peasant cause looked very hopeful. But they had signalised their successes by deeds of horrid cruelty and violence (e. g. the outrage perpetrated upon Count Ludwig von Helfenstein, see p. 21), and this turned Luther, who had at first looked with some favour upon the ideals they professed, completely against them. The nobles, frightened into desperate resistance, banded together and inflicted one defeat after another upon the undisciplined throngs of peasants. Münzer was crushed in May at Frankenhausen, where 5000 peasants fell, and he himself was taken and executed. The Swabian League under George Truchsess of Waldburg defeated the Württemberg peasants at Böblingen and burned Weinsberg to the ground, then marched upon Würzburg to the relief of Our Lady's Mountain. The peasants went to meet him, but Berlichingen secretly fled, and only 2000 peasants under Metzler entered

the battle at Königshofen. They were completely annihilated on the 2nd of June. The rebellion was now crushed, and a fearful punishment was meted out: sixty men of Würzburg were put to death, fifty-seven men in Kitzingen were blinded upon the order of Margrave Casimir of Ansbach (p. 166), and the ringleaders in Rothenburg were beheaded; also heavy fines were exacted of all the cities that had aided the peasants. History hardly records a more futile and more tragic waste of human life.

In the main, Hauptmann has preserved the historical setting with remarkable fidelity. But like Goethe in his *Egmont,* or like Schiller in his *Maria Stuart,* he has sought to focus the dramatic attention upon a hero whose historical part was not as striking as it here appears. Florian Geyer was one of the leaders but played a minor rôle; Hauptmann centres the chief interest of the action and the fate of the entire uprising in Geyer's personality, thus giving a rather remote historic incident a fresh and gripping appeal even for the present-day reader.

The language of the original is strongly reminiscent of the sixteenth century, both in the use of archaic or obsolete expressions and in the employment of racy, vulgar, and at times even obscene speech, such as that roistering age delighted in. It has been the translator's endeavour to preserve something of this archaic flavour without making the style too crabbed.

ARGUMENT OF THE PLAY

From the beginning, our attention is directed to the fortress of Our Lady's Mountain, whose successful resistance symbolises the failure of the peasants' effort. At the same time, the opening scene shows clearly the division of loyalties on the part of the nobles themselves.

Then the action proper begins and remains centred in the peasant camp throughout the first four acts. It is a motley and kaleidoscopically changing scene: pedlar and innkeeper, roving minstrel and money-lending Jew, religious fanatic and roistering lansquenet—these are but a few of the characteristic and wholly genuine types. If the action suffers somewhat in concentration, as a result of this great assemblage of characters, we are given an incomparably vivid picture of sixteenth century German life. And at the same time we see in actual operation the causes that lead to the ultimate defeat of the peasants: 1) suspicion of Geyer as a noble and desire for peasant leadership, 2) insubordination on the part of the troops, 3) incompetence of the peasant leaders, 4) opposition resulting from peasant violence and cruelty, 5) religious fanaticism, 6) disaffection in the face of enemy successes. Geyer could have saved the situation, we are led to feel, but his hands are tied and invaluable opportunities are thrown away without his consent and against his

advice. In the end he is but the leader of a forlorn hope, grimly selling his life as dearly as possible. Deserted by his brother-in-law, deserted even by his own wife, his demoralised troops outnumbered and scattered, the only soul that is left to him, Molly, a poor camp harlot, slaughtered before his eyes, he meets his inevitable death without flinching and almost without regret. But his death is also the knell of the futile peasant rebellion, and thus the final cry, "Florian Geyer is dead!" takes on a character that is somehow titanic and awe-inspiring. *Florian Geyer* is not a great stage-play, but it is a stirring drama of human endeavour and misguided effort.

B. Q. M.

PERSONS OF THE PLAY

Bishop Konrad of Würzburg.
Sebastian von Rotenhahn, *Steward to the Bishop.*
Margrave Frederick, *Captain-in-Chief of the garrison of Our Lady's Mountain.*
Hans von Lichtenstein, *Canon.*
Heinz von Stein
Wolf von Hanstein
Hans von Grumbach
Sebastian von Geyer
Wolf von Kastell
Laurence von Hutten
Kunz von der Mühlen
} *Knights.*
Gilgenessig, *Clerk.*
Florian Geyer.
Stephen von Menzingen.
Götz von Berlichingen.
Conrad von Hanstein.
Thomas von Hartheim.
William von Grumbach.
Anna von Grumbach, *his wife.*
Tellermann, *Florian Geyer's Field-Captain.*
Karlstadt.
Rector Besenmeyer.
The Mayor of Ochsenfurt.
Laurence Löffelholz, *Field-Clerk to Florian Geyer.*
Martin, *a strolling scholar.*

FINKENMEISLIN, KUNZLIN } *Messengers.*
SARTORIUS.
LINK, *a man of Würzburg.*
JACOB KOHL, PASTOR BUBENLEBEN, WENDEL HIPPLER, GEORGE METZLER, FLAMMENBECKER, KRATZER, *Innkeeper* } *Peasant leaders.*
FIRST, SECOND, THIRD } CAPTAIN OF PEASANTS.
HANS THE SHEPHERD.
MOLLY, *camp harlot.*
GEORGE KUMPF, KILIAN, *Armourer*, JOE FRANKENHEIM, *Schoolmaster*, OSWALD BARCHART, OXENHANS, MARKART TÖPPELIN, *called* "Bohnlein", ENGELHART GOPPOLT, *Linen-weaver*, HANS KUNRAT, HANS BEHEIM, *Mason*, CHRISTHEINZ } *Men of Rothenburg.*
FIRST, SECOND, THIRD } CITIZEN OF ROTHENBURG.
RENEGADE MONK.
PEDLAR.
JOEY, *an old Jew.*
AN OLD WOMAN.
A MAN IN RAGS, *her son.*

Claus, *a strolling player.*
His Wife.
Sebastian Schertlin.
Feistel.
Ursel, *servant in Grumbach's castle.*
Peter, *a horse-boy.*
A Man of Weinsberg.
The Blind Monk.
A Serf.
A Peasant.
The Waitress.
First } Horseman.
Second }
Peasant Men and Women.
Knights.
First Knight.
Second Knight.
First Canon.
First Halberdier.
Suite of the Bishop, Knights, Guardsmen, Peasants, Musicians, Populace.

PROLOGUE

Our Lady's Mountain, a castle near Würzburg. The great hall. To the left a sort of throne with canopy. A number of knights, some in armour, stand in waiting or move about, conversing in undertones. In an embrasure at right stands the clerk GILGENESSIG, *a short, weazened little man, reading aloud from a fly-leaf to some knights. Among the listeners:* HANS VON LICHTENSTEIN, *a* CANON *of about forty,* HEINZ VON STEIN, WOLF VON HANSTEIN, HANS VON GRUMBACH, *Knights.*

GILGENESSIG

[*Reads.*] "First of all 'tis our humble plea!"

HANS VON LICHTENSTEIN

[*Gritting his teeth.*] O thou spitfire! Most humble.

GILGENESSIG

[*Reads.*] "First of all 'tis our humble plea that an entire parish may have power to choose and elect its own pastor. The same shall preach to us the unvarnished Gospel, plainly and without any human additions."

HANS VON LICHTENSTEIN

[*Snorting.*] A most humble and submissive sup-

plication with flails and mattocks, spears and arquebuses.

Heinz von Stein

Patterned after the paternoster of church-robbers and heretics.

Wolf von Hanstein

Seemeth that to you so unreasonable a demand, gentle sirs?

Heinz von Stein

Read, clerk, read!

Hans von Lichtenstein

Methinks it smells here a little of Lutheran porridge, Karlstadt soup,[1] and Hussite pestilence.

Wolf von Hanstein

Seemeth that to you so unreasonable, gentlemen?

Hans von Grumbach

Oh, let be, Wolf. Else the little man will burst with rage.

Wolf von Hanstein

[*Loudly.*] What is writ in the Book? "I will free my flock from their lips." Ye have drunk the milk, dressed yourselves with the wool, and that which was fat ye have slaughtered. Now

1 Andreas Rudolf Bodenstein, called Karlstadt from his birthplace, was one of the extremists among the German reformers. Accused of complicity in the Peasants' War, he was saved by Luther's aid, and died in Basle in 1541.

they hunger for bread and thirst after wine, but not only bread and wine do they seek, nay, the Lord hath sent them hunger and thirst to hear His word, plain and pure and unvarnished, and, in spite of all parsons with fat bellies and sleek skins, without any human additions.

GILGENESSIG

[*Reads.*] "Secondly, seeing that the true tithes are ordained in the Old Testament and that all is fulfilled in the New, natheless gladly would we keep the true grain-tithe."

HEINZ VON STEIN

Bravely babbled, Squire Dunghandler, excellently belched, Gossip Clodhopper!

GILGENESSIG

[*Reads.*] "The small tithe [1] we will not give at all."

HANS VON LICHTENSTEIN

Aha! The Devil has read you the riot act.

WOLF VON HANSTEIN

Revered sir, will you answer me one question?

HANS VON LICHTENSTEIN

That depends, Sir Knight.

WOLF VON HANSTEIN

Well then, since the tithes from all lands belong

[1] The "small tithe" referred principally to vegetables and fruits.

to the Bishop by levitical law, why does he not have himself circumcised?

[*Confusion among some listeners, laughter among others.*

Hans von Lichtenstein

Pox on't, Sir Knight, let the Devil give you answer to that.

Wolf von Hanstein

Are ye horrified, good sirs? Well, then read Leviticus, and if it be not so commanded therein, then will I no longer curse Magister Hoogstraten in Cologne as a contemptible beast.

Gilgenessig

[*Reads.*] "Thirdly, it hath hitherto been the custom that they have regarded us as their slaves."

[*Commotion, laughter, and indignation of the majority.*

Heinz von Stein

True enough, slaves there have been so long as the world stands; quarrel as to that with the Lord God, 'tis His doing.

Hans von Lichtenstein

Now they think that they'll get the better of God if they set up the Devil to be their abbot, and that he will make a gentleman out of every scamp among them.

[*Enter* Count Wolf von Kastell. *Also, the hall fills more and more with canons, knights, and all sorts of court officials.*

Wolf von Kastell

What reads the clerk?

Gilgenessig

[*Reads.*] . . . "the custom that they have regarded us as their slaves, which is most pitiful, seeing that Christ hath redeemed and saved us all by the precious shedding of His blood, the herdsman as well as the highest."

Wolf von Hanstein

[*Repeating.*] "The herdsman as well as the highest."

Hans von Grumbach

Against which there is nothing that might well be said, gentlemen.

Wolf von Kastell

What do ye read?

Gilgenessig

The fundamental and true principles of all peasantry and tenants of the clerical and secular overlords, by whom they hold themselves to be oppressed, also the action and instruction which has been undertaken by all troops and companies of the peasants.[1]

[1] A historical document, the so-called "twelve articles" comprising the peasants' demands for the alleviation of their just grievances.

Wolf von Kastell

The twelve articles wherewith St. Valentine[1] hath bewrayed them. Whence have ye them?

First Knight

Oh, do they not fly about all the land? Have you not found them in your scrip?

[A large number of knights and canons display the document.

Voices

Here! Take and read!

Gilgenessig

The pamphlet from which I am reading to you, gracious gentlemen, was handed in over the wall but lately by a messenger from Götz von Berlichingen.[2]

Wolf von Kastell

Spreading his peacock feathers mightily, is Götz.

Hans von Lichtenstein

Also sent a refusal to our most gracious lord and Bishop and a notice of the termination of our abbey's fiefs.

[1] St. Valentine the martyr, who died in 306, and for whom the 14th of February is named, is here confused with the celebrated Gnostic, Valentinus, who came from Alexandria to Rome about the year 141. Cf. also the reference on p. 69.

[2] A German knight, 1480–1562. He took only a minor part in the Peasants' War, and that under duress, and was acquitted of the charges against him by the imperial chamber in 1526. See the drama by Goethe which bears his name.

Gilgenessig

Dated at Amorbach on Thursday after Misericordias Domini.[1]

Second Knight

Have ye heard, gentlemen, how horribly the Evangelicals carried on at Amorbach? I was in the keep towards Glissberg when the warders blew to announce the messenger. Climbed on the wall and talked with him. 'Twas Köchle, the body-servant of Götz von Berlichingen, whom I knew well from a ride that we had taken together as comrades. "Köchle, what are ye doing," shouted I to him, "thou and thy master? Have ye turned into black peasants?" "So it has to be, good Squire," he gave me reply, "be it our weal or woe; but 'tis grievous to see how they have laid everything waste at Amorbach, like raging fat swine. I have hated the priests all my life," cried he, "but Christian love hath here been shown in Turkish fashion." "Were ye quartered with the Benedictines?" I shout to him. "Aye, good Squire, and in the whole abbey not one nail is left in its post."

Wolf von Kastell

God's corpse! Gentlemen, I had rather hire out as sh—house tender than let myself be used like Götz and appointed field-general of an army wherein nothing but hopeless rabble, gamblers, thieves, tramps, and pot-menders follows after him.

Second Knight

'Tis beyond a doubt, gentlemen, and Köchle

[1] The second Sunday after Easter.

brought word of it from Amorbach, that Count William von Henneberg hath also joined forces with the peasants.

Wolf von Kastell

Alas! 'tis even as the squire saith. My brother-in-law hath likewise become bound up with the rabble. They having laid waste for him villages, castles, and abbeys, he hath been constrained and compelled by them. To be sure, an they already had me at the pillory and were fastening upon me the rogue-flayer with its glowing irons, yet I had sooner become brother to the Devil himself than to these snot-nosed peasant bloodhounds.

Hans von Lichtenstein

So that is the famous and reliable comfort which Count William hath assured so indulgently and certainly by decree and document to our gracious lord, Bishop Konrad, namely, that he now fraternises with the peasants.

Heinz von Stein

O miserable aid! Long enough might we have waited ere men-at-arms had come to us in accord with Henneberg's promise.

Gilgenessig

The letters are but paper now.

First Canon

And have fallen into the ashes and been burned.

Wolf von Hanstein

But I say to you, gentlemen, Count William von Henneberg comprehends the times, but we comprehend them not. For what hath the lesser gentry had to fear from the overlords of the church all this time? Tribulation, oppression of body and soul.

Hans von Lichtenstein

And what hath it had to fear from the peasants? Will you tell me that, Sir Knight? Must you be told, sirrah, how the peasants lately treated the lesser gentry at Weinsberg? Have you forgot, Sir Knight, that against right and the usage of war they made Ludwig von Helfenstein run the gauntlet, and forty captive knights and men besides? Now it is known through the land how they ravaged there. The head and hair of one victim was carried about on a spear by a "pious evangelical brother." A cursed woman and devilish black witch thrust a bread-knife into Helfenstein's body and smeared her shoes with the blood and fat that oozed therefrom. Do you natheless deem, Squire, that the peasantry bear a friendly regard for you? By our dear Lady! trust me, an the peasants retain the upper hand, then will the prophecy come true, that the lesser gentry shall one day have to eat misery made of vinegar, basted with starvation, and roast poor knights in bitter wormwood.

[*Many knights strike up their swords, and several times the cry is heard:* "Vengeance for Weinsberg."

Wolf von Hanstein

Now ye cry: "Vengeance for Weinsberg," and God knows that ye would not deal gently with the murderous rogues if ye came at them. But do ye also know what the peasants cried as they took Weinsberg by storm and drove knights, citizens, and servants in couples? "Vengeance for Wurzach! Vengeance for the seven thousand of Wurzach!" Look ye, gentlemen, the Lord High Steward hath also had no mercy upon them and hath caused the "wicked war" to be proclaimed on all hands. Aye, and lets the provosts loose upon them with gallows and rack, and puts away the peasants' best men as though they were chickens. Think of the God-fearing preacher Jacob Wehe at Leipheim.

Hans von Lichtenstein

Why, well and good, and so it should be; let force give tongue and stop their mouths for them, all these accursed, false, hellish prophets and fanatics that Satan hath aroused on all sides. Out with the accursed, hellish tares that he hath sown among the wheat, everywhere and in all parts of the German lands! Let them ever be plucked, torn, pierced, burnt, ever mown down, be they sown by Luther, Karlstadt, Münzer,[1] Huss, or Wyclif. The buck hath gone too far into the garden. Keep thundering upon them, George Steward! Be a true St. George and dragon-slayer, as

[1] Thomas Münzer, 1489–1525, one of the fanatics of the Reformation. Defeated by Landgrave Philip of Hesse, he was taken prisoner, tortured, and beheaded at Mühlhausen.

it pleaseth God and our blessed Virgin Mary. Had it been done ere now, this uprising might hardly have become so overbearing.

Gilgenessig

[*Reads.*] "Fourthly, it hath hitherto been customary that no poor man had the right to take game, fowl, or fish in flowing water. [*The majority laugh.*] The which we deem wholly unseemly and unbrotherly."

Wolf von Kastell

Pest upon you, not with my will shall any lout of a peasant lift a crossbow in my hunting-grounds.

Gilgenessig

[*Reads.*] "Fifthly, we are also oppressed in the matter of wood, since our lordships have taken all the forests unto themselves. Sixthly, our grievous complaint is of our statute-labour, the which from day to day is augmented and increaseth daily."

Heinz von Stein

The matter stands thus: the peasant would fain idle about the whole time, show himself in the alehouses, dispute about Holy Writ, and run after the preachers. But the plough hath grown too heavy for him. So if he is admonished as to his oaths and duties, aha, then he is Squire Villager and bestirs himself as little as if Satan had formed him from a clout of glue. And then when his master shows himself to be in earnest and causes a rebellious louse-head and obstreperous ass to be put

in irons—God's pyne, but he is the most godless tyrant and despot.

Gilgenessig

[*Reads.*] "Seventhly, we are heavily burdened, and those that hold lands, for that the same cannot pay the ground-rents."

Wolf von Kastell

That doth not surprise me, surely not. Do they not carry on more wildly upon their lands with gormandising, squandering, and revelry than the most profligate ravager of a nobleman? Nothing but celebrations, feasting, wine-swilling, and spewing up again. Instead of coarse drill, as befits a coarse bumpkin, they wear cloth from Mechlin and London. Their wives want to outdo the gentlewomen in splendour of dress, and many a one hath the worth of a farm in a chain about her neck. They hang their daughters with silk and satin, marten, ermine, and gold brocade, so that a noble maiden looks like a stable-wench by comparison.

[Laurence von Hutten *enters exhausted and breathless.*

Laurence von Hutten

New tidings, gentlemen!

Heinz von Stein

Hast thou encountered the Devil, Laurence?

Laurence von Hutten

Praise be to God and St. Anne that I am on

safe ground! For someone shot away my nag from under me, even as we twain, my nag and I, were trying to cross the ford and were swimming the river Main.

Wolf von Kastell

They shoot with the hand-tubes?

Laurence von Hutten

Aye, that they do, did ye not know? The hoers of Würzburg, in the vineyards along the Main, take their hand-guns with them and have them lying on the ground as they work. When they sight by chance one of the Bishop's horsemen, why then they open fire upon us as if we were wild ducks—bang, bang—from behind the little walls. I've a good steed, and even with the lead in his body he took a brave leap forwards, so that I lighted on my feet like a cat, God be praised, and did not pitifully drown in the deep water, all in armour as I was.

Wolf von Kastell

Is there no hangman down in Würzburg any more, to cut apart such a damned treacherous murderer and peace-breaker, so that his head is the smaller and his body the greater part?

Laurence von Hutten

Why, no. For the Würzburgers have driven out Master Jacob, because he said that there would be no end to the revolt in Würzburg until he had cut the heads off more than one, and George Bermetter first of all. For that the Würzburgers

would fain have had his life; so he is now here in the castle together with his men.

Gilgenessig

To-day, Sir Count, there is in all Würzburg no witness to depose aught, no notary to record aught, no advocate to draw up a case, no bailiff to arrest, no judge to examine, no authority to sentence, even as there is no hangman to execute it.

Hans von Lichtenstein

What tidings bring you, stout Squire?

Laurence von Hutten

What tidings bring I, good sirs? Neither more nor less than this, that I have assured news and am credibly informed that all the peasant troops are marching upon Würzburg, and that in all the history of the world there has never been such a journeying, swarming, and company-marching with banners, pig-stickers, flails, halberds, fire-arms, wagons, and arquebuses. I am credibly informed that the Evangelicals are proceeding hither from Amorbach, that they have a crucifix with them and have sworn that they would even slay the child unborn if the Bishop, our most gracious lord, would not give up the castle of his own free will.

[*Commotion and agitation among the knights.*

Wolf von Kastell

He who dies of threats, gentlemen, will have

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an ass's farts for his knell. Have ye more of such tidings, Sir Knight?

Laurence von Hutten

Aye, Kitzingen is in the brotherhood.

First Knight

Od's guts, so Kitzingen makes common cause with the peasants?

Laurence von Hutten

On the word of a nobleman.

Hans von Lichtenstein

'Twill be a sore vexation to Margrave Casimir of Ansbach.

Wolf von Hanstein

Think ye so? Rather doth it seem to me that no evil eye looks down from Ansbach upon the whole peasant affair. . . . Is not the Margrave inclined to the Lutheran doctrines, full as well as Henneberg? Is it not the talk of the land that Schwarzenberg. the mighty knight and Lutheran, rides with messages 'twixt Ansbach and the camps of the peasants? Meseemeth not impossible that the Margrave's cannon and the peasants' flails will knock upon our gate up here at the same moment.

Wolf von Kastell

Wouldst thou loosen our bowels for fear, Wolf, with thy crack-brained stuff and thy tales of the spinning-room? What though the Margrave lust like a fox after a fat goose, and though all his

soul were set upon snapping up the goods of the see and marching into Our Lady's Mountain as a duke in Franconia, yet doth he know that with these rebel bumpkins he can no more accomplish that than he could mount a tower by stepping across the falls at Schaffhausen.

[Sebastian von Rotenhahn, *steward to the Bishop, enters in armour and traverses the hall, intending to go to the* Bishop. They halt him.

Heinz von Stein

Listen, your worthiness, is this rumour confirmed? Hath Kitzingen sworn allegiance to Florian Geyer and his black hordes?

Sebastian von Rotenhahn

Beloved, faithful friends and gentlemen! Have patience, tarry a while.

First Knight

Why have we been called hither, your worship?

Sebastian von Rotenhahn

That ye shall learn from his highness, our most gracious prince and lord, from his own lips.

Second Knight

'Tis said that from all sides the armed bands of the peasants are marching against us, having sworn to spare no drop of noble blood.

Sebastian von Rotenhahn

Beloved and faithful, have patience, tarry a while.

Second Knight

Will the Bishop shut up the castle or will he evacuate it?

Sebastian von Rotenhahn

At Weinsberg, gentlemen, Florian Geyer had an easy task, but here there are stouter walls, an impregnable castle, so long as we are at one. Surely it were most pitiful and shameful did we not stand by so noble a lord, so mild, kind, and just a prince as our Bishop Konrad is. And would redound to the everlasting disgrace and shame of our celebrated imperial Franconian knighthood.

Wolf von Hanstein

True enough, Bastian, the Bishop is a God-fearing and just gentleman, and I have naught against him; but the whole war hath naught to do with persons. There was once a knight, and never was his like, proud as he, brave as he: stout and true did he cling to the truth. And he wrote against the priests so long as a vein flowed in him: Ulrich von Hutten [1] was his name. Well then,

[1] Ulrich von Hutten, 1488–1523, the eldest son of a poor knightly family, took part in the war which overthrew Ulrich of Württemberg (see note to p. 198), and became the fast friend of Franz von Sickingen. The latter's defeat and death (see note to p. 77) ruined Hutten, who, befriended at the last by Zwingli, died at the latter's home near Zürich in abject poverty. Hutten was

Hutten is dead and gone; the priests drove him into poverty, misery, and death. But his work hath abode, his seed hath remained and standeth now in bloom. "Awake," wrote he, "thou noble German freedom!" and that noble German freedom awoke. But now, Bastian, now that God hath looked upon these matters and awakened, now ye are asleep. In those days ye were but one heart, thou and Hutten. But so soon as he was gone thou didst die with him. Or wilt thou tell me that thou still livest? Pox, how couldst thou have left thy blood-brother unavenged! How couldst thou have endured to let thyself be a tool of the priests, and let others be built up into a rampart against the . . .

Sebastian von Rotenhahn

Why talk thyself into a rage, Wolf? Against whom speakest thou, against what speakest thou? An a great general reformation is to begin, tell me, do I set my face against it, doth the Bishop oppose it? Hath he not rather freely offered, where just complaint might be, to hear it, to reduce unreasonable burdens and remove them, to conform and give weight to all that other princes, lords, and proprietors should resolve upon and erect? Seest thou not that here 'tis but a question of opposing madness and frenzy that trample down, crush, and lay waste everything, the toilsome gains of the poor, the houses of the rich, castles, churches, treasures of art and learning? O Wolf, into what blindness hast thou fallen!

a true patriot and a literary genius, but unable to cope with the kaleidoscopic changes of his age.

Were Ulrich von Hutten still alive, here would he stand beside me, as true as I am his friend.

Laurence von Hutten

As true as God lives, here would he stand beside us.

Sebastian von Rotenhahn

Aye, Wolf, so it is, and look about thee now. Did not Luther turn against the peasants and against their bloodthirsty, hellish companies and troops? . . .

[*Enter* Bishop Konrad von Würzburg *with a great retinue.*

Wolf von Kastell

[*First to perceive the* Bishop.] Hail to our most gracious lord, Bishop Konrad of Würzburg, Duke of Franconia!

Most of the Knights

Hail, hail!

[*The* Bishop *proceeds to the throne-seat; his retinue, among them the young captain-in-chief* Provost Frederick von Brandenburg, *take their positions about him. After silence ensues, the* Bishop *speaks, standing.*

Bishop Konrad

Beloved friends, I know that ye are all faithfully and well disposed toward me as my servants, vassals, and members of congregation. Even so have I caused you to be summoned, in order to

make known to you how I am minded to bear myself hereafter in these unfortunate and daily more dangerous times.

It is known to you how on all hands among the German nation a rebellion hath arisen in our day, and the common man deemeth himself oppressed with unreasonable and unendurable burdens.

When the peasants of the Rothenburg district rose and banded themselves together at Ohrenbach and Brettheim last March, I wrote to the governor of Mayence, and also to Lewis Count Palatine, for aid. When thereupon Margrave Casimir appointed a diet at Neuenstadt, to take counsel as to how we might most advantageously and fruitfully arm ourselves against the aggression of the peasants, I sent my counsellors thither. But nothing fruitful and advantageous came to discussion at that diet. Now I have written to my own knights and proprietors and sent for them as officers of the see.

My peasants also took to arms forthwith, raised the banner of war, blockaded roads and highways, but, as is now plain to see, only for my woe and not for my weal. After the peasants' unchristian and unbrotherly enterprise had grown ever more threatening in upper and nether Germany, and Florian Geyer had taken Weinsberg by storm, I sent once again to his highness the Margrave of Ansbach, my dear friend and lord, a prayer for aid, and besought him through his highness's blood-brother, our dear and faithful friend and provost, [*Here he lays his hands on the shoulder of* Margrave Frederick.] Margrave Frederick in person. But no comforting answer came to me,

since his highness is not less in danger and must expect the same unrest, rebellion, and distress as we. Meanwhile the flood hath risen ever higher, sweeping over all estates, princedoms, monasteries, castles, and cities; I sought aid of the League in Swabia, I sent my counsellors into the camps of the peasants, but all to no avail.

Dear friends and gentlemen, all this cannot be unknown to you, nor the fact that I have freely and willingly offered to avert and reduce just complaints of my city and lands. God knows that I was ready to do all things cheerfully in order that matters might not go to such lengths, but all adroitness and good reason was quite in vain, no appeasing word would they hear, everything they tossed to the winds. Thus at Würzburg hath it gone so far that they have invited the peasants' troops with writs; citizens and council are all of one mind, would liefer join the peasants to-day than to-morrow and help them push our strong fortress off this mountain. Now that I have had to see all this and to recognise that even from Count William of Henneberg no further aid is to be expected, also that nothing is more certain than that the peasants will march before Our Lady's Mountain, besiege it, and try to capture it, I have taken counsel with my advisers and resolved to betake myself away. Yea, dear friends, so I stand now before you. [*With strong repressed emotion.*] Of all my princedom and lands there is left to me naught but this one castle, and now must I forsake even that. But God only knows whether I shall ever enter it again.

[*Pauses, overcome; silent commotion and whispering among the knights.*

It lays no small weight upon me to march away and leave so many princes, counts, knights, and servants in the castle. But it has met with the approval of myself and my counsellors that I should betake myself away and to the Elector Lewis, Count Palatine, in order to obtain his personal aid or that of the Swabian League at Ulm. Be assured that I shall spare no pains, nor think of any other thing by day or night than of how I shall redeem you from the dangers and fears wherein I leave you here.

[*Murmurs and whispering among the knights.*

Sebastian von Rotenhahn

[*Steps forward.*] Most noble prince and lord! Your princely grace's will and intent we have apprehended, and beg your princely grace not to think otherwise of us than that each of us will bear himself as is befitting and seemly in accordance with knightly honour. [*Decided signs of agreement on the part of the majority.*] There is no Franconian among us who is not willing to leave body and goods with his duke and lord—

Wolf von Hanstein

[*Softly.*] The Devil made him duke in Franconia.

Sebastian von Rotenhahn

[*Continuing.*] —and to give service so long as he hath strength to lift his arm.

My good friends, comrades, and brothers of the

Franconian gentry know only too well what is now at stake.

The mob hath arisen on all hands, and wheresoever anything towers aloft, there they have reached out their arms to it, there they take hold with unclean hands. Call themselves evangelical brothers and their gathering a Christian brotherhood, to the horror and shame of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Rather should they be called hellish brothers and their union a Turkish brotherhood, since everywhere they rage and lay waste vineyards, trample down fruits, burn and murder and dishonour women, rifle chests and empty purses.

It is alas plain to see that with princes, lords, and potentates, in brief, with authorities everywhere, both sword and heart have fallen. A great fear hath entered their hearts and paralysed them. None will extend his hand to the next, none will bestir himself, until the very wall against which he leans becomes too hot for him.

Most gracious lord, most illustrious prince! None of us here is paralysed by fear. 'Tis true: the rabble comes flying like snow-flakes, all the while, like the flies in summer. 'Tis as if peasants had come raining and hailing down in all parts of the German lands, but the most part of them is a naked, untried folk, with the hearts of rabbits; wine-boys and tavern-keepers, fellows that run first of all for the barrels and the bacon and are not wont to encounter a man.

Beloved, God-fearing comrades! In our garrison there is none that is not a *man,* from our captain-in-chief Elector Frederick of Brandenburg down to the merest boy. Let them come

and break their hard peasant heads against our walls. We will pepper them with grape-shot until the chills run up their backs.

Cries of the Knights

[*In martial enthusiasm.*] Come on, come on!

Sebastian von Rotenhahn

We'll frost their Würzburg Easter-cake with powder and sauce it with pitch and sulphur. And they shall have leaden pears to swallow with it, as much as ever they will.

Cries of the Knights

Come on, come on!

Laurence von Hutten

Our walls are strong; the moats are deep; traverses are erected; wattlework is made; keep, gates, towers, all in good condition. We have powder and provisions, water, wine, wood, coal, flour, bacon. We can live on the fat of the land and hold them off two months and longer. Well we know that it is not only a question of the castle, but of the entire German nation. This is the rock, friends; if the floods undermine it, then all else will plunge after it and sink to the bottom, and naught will remain of the entire great German nation but a heap of wretched stones and ruins.

Most gracious lord and prince! God hath placed us upon this rock, and we will hold out with God, guard and defend it, and were it against the Devil himself, so long as we still have a drop

of blood in our bodies and can draw breath.

BISHOP KONRAD

May God and St. George grant it!

[*A tumult and frenzy of enthusiasm burst out. The knights shout* "Come on, come on!" *embrace each other, shake each other's hands with tears.* "Long live Bishop Konrad! Long live our Bishop and lord!" *is heard, mingled with repeated cries of* "Come on, come on!"

[*During the general commotion the* BISHOP *and his retinue withdraw. The* PROVOST MARGRAVE FREDERICK OF BRANDENBURG *remains with his followers.*

KUNZ VON DER MÜHLEN

[*Shouts.*] I will drive Florian Geyer into a mouse-hole!

FIRST KNIGHT

Peasant, beware, my horse will trample thee!

KUNZ VON DER MÜHLEN

Let them come! We will drive Florian Geyer and his Weinsberg murderers into a mouse-hole.

SEBASTIAN VON GEYER

[*To* WOLF VON HANSTEIN.] Wolf, Wolf, I can contain myself no longer. Shall this idle fellow thus vilify my own brother?

WOLF VON HANSTEIN

[*Aloud to* KUNZ VON DER MÜHLEN.] Florian Geyer is as honest a knight and horseman of the gentry as any in the land of Franconia.

Kunz von der Mühlen

Florian Geyer is a scoundrel that should be hanged.

Wolf von Hanstein

[*To* Sebastian Geyer, *who is about to burst out.*] Calm thee, Sebastian; let the little spurred cock crow upon his dung. —— When will you pay for your patent of nobility, hey, Squire Street-sweeper?

Kunz von der Mühlen

[*Shouts.*] Florian Geyer is an outlaw, a foe of the Emperor and the whole German nation. Hath served the French at Pavia.[1]

Wolf von Hanstein

[*Close by* Kunz von der Mühlen.] Little man, whether the hangman hath left thee any ears under thy pitchy hair, that I know not. But thou art a helmeted ass if thou hast them not. And if thou ceasest not to cry, I will stuff this mailed fist into thy slanderous snout until the red sweat come pouring out. . . .

Sebastian von Geyer

Wolf, step aside. This coxcomb hath run away from the peasants. Thinks to make a brave show here at court, to earn an easy fief with compliments and honeyed words. May the Devil bless it to him.

[1] The play contains many allusions to the long siege of Pavia by Francis I of France. On February 24, 1525, the Marquis Pescara, acting as lieutenant of Charles V, defeated Francis by a brilliant attack and took him prisoner. There were German mercenaries in both armies, but Geyer is here reproached for taking sides against the Emperor.

Wolf von Kastell

Peace, gentlemen. Our supreme captain, the Provost Margrave, desires to speak.

Wolf von Hanstein

Sebastian—!

Sebastian von Geyer

God's torments flay thee! the hound shall atone for this.

Wolf von Hanstein

Come with me.

Sebastian von Geyer

Whither?

Wolf von Hanstein

The priest leads you on a rope. I go to the peasants. Wilt join me?

Sebastian von Geyer

'Twill not do, Wolf, it goeth against both duty and conscience.

Margrave Frederick

Dear friends, appointed by our most gracious lord as captain-in-chief over this castle, I hereby proclaim and announce that from this moment I will close the fortress and prepare it for defence. Therefore let them who are willed to remain in our garrison betake them to the great court. There will the oath be read, the which each shall

promise and swear to keep. But whoso hath no desire to aid us further, let him now depart.

[Wolf von Hanstein, *amid general silence, steps out of the ranks.*

Wolf von Kastell

Whither wilt, Wolf?

Wolf von Hanstein

To give aid to the Gospel.

The Knights

Scoundrel, knave, traitor, coward!

Wolf von Hanstein

[*Shouts back in fury.*] May the plague rot all priests' slaves. Hurrah for German evangelical freedom!

The Knights

Hurrah for our Bishop and lord, hurrah for Bishop Konrad of Würzburg!

Wolf von Hanstein

Bootlace, bootlace![1] [*Exit.*

THE CURTAIN FALLS

[1] The "laced boot" (*Bundschuh*) was a form of footwear used by the peasants in contradistinction to the high unlaced boot of the knight. Hence it came to be employed as a symbol of the peasants' cause, and the word *"Bundschuh"* was used as a rallying cry.

THE FIRST ACT

The chapter-hall of the New Minster at Würzburg. In the rear wall an arched doorway to the church. Window with niche at the right. For the rest, choir-stalls along the walls and a long bare table, surrounded with chairs, in the centre of the great room.

MARTIN *is nailing up green branches which* FINKENMEISLIN *and* KUNZLIN *hand to him from a basket. At the table sits* LAURENCE LÖFFELHOLZ, *a wet cloth tied about his head, documents piled up before him. In a window-niche are* RECTOR BESENMEYER *and* BEZOLD, *the mayor of Ochsenfurt, observing the goings-on in the street through the open window.* STEPHEN VON MENZINGEN, *a knight of about forty years in full armour, sits indolently in one of the choir-stalls.*

THE MAYOR

Sit down, Brother Rector, you are weary.

RECTOR BESENMEYER

The fever shake you, Brother Mayor! *Necdum omnis hebet effœto in corpore sanguis:* that is, not yet is all the blood dried up in this old body. What think you of me?—Who is that, the one on the white nag?

MAYOR

The fat-paunch, whom his little horse can scarcely carry?

LÖFFELHOLZ

If you know not what a full sow is, Brother Rector, then take a good look at Jacob Kohl.

RECTOR BESENMEYER

Is that Jacob Kohl? Hardly looks like a great fighting man.

MAYOR

Aye, and he was the first whose hair began to stand on end; yet all the way hither I doubt whether he hath seen a single dead man.

LÖFFELHOLZ

Hath he no understanding of warfare, all the more bravely doth he show himself, stands his ground all the better with his mouth and with the wine-jug in the alehouse. Hark how they shout to him. His name's on every tongue, he's well liked, but he'll scarcely push the Bishop's castle off the hill.

MAYOR

Unless threats could topple it down—

MENZINGEN

Will the council hold its session here?

LÖFFELHOLZ

Yea, brother, the summons hath gone out to all

the captains of all the companies about Würzburg.

MENZINGEN

'Tis needful for us to have a definite answer touching the proposed instruction and action, that we may ride home to Rothenburg with it.

LÖFFELHOLZ

Calm thee, Brother Menzingen: compose thyself in patience—

MARTIN

Give it here, Finkenmeislin.

LÖFFELHOLZ

Haste thee, Martin. Thou must go to the town hall with papers.

MARTIN

Aye, aye, brother.

[*He sings.*

Winter, thou must bid farewell,
I know thy power is ended.
What in winter to me befell,
By summer must be mended.

What a face thou makest, Finkenmeislin. Hi there, Kunzlin! Knowest not that the year of jubilee beginneth?

KUNZLIN

Aye, to be sure, brother.

MARTIN

Then leap i' the air and shout hooray.

KUNZLIN

[*Leaps and shouts.*] Hooray!

MARTIN

Od's lungs! Where's my hammer? Give it here.

FINKENMEISLIN

I have it not.

MARTIN

Give it here.

MENZINGEN

He hath it not. Hearest thou not, thou beggar's boy?

MARTIN

Come now, brother! I have oft enough helped sing the bread-song before the peasants' doors. Now the peasants are singing before the castles and houses of their overlords. But such a glorious song as this I have never sung in all my life. Give me that hammer!

FINKENMEISLIN

Od's guts and gizzard! I have it not.

MARTIN

[*Reaches into* FINKENMEISLIN's *pocket and pulls it out.*] Now then, what's that? Bah!

FINKENMEISLIN

Now how did that come about?

MARTIN

How that came about? Aye, now guess for me! Why went I to Occam[1] to school? What do ye know of all my subtleties? For instance, Brother Menzingen, can God unite himself with His creatures or not? God can unite with His creatures. The Father is the Son of the Virgin Mary. The Holy Ghost is man and the Son of the Virgin. The Father who never died would have been able to die, and the Son who died might have been able never to die. Do you not believe it? Your body, brother, can by intensity be infinitely white at a given spot and by intensity black to infinity. Do you understand that or not?

MENZINGEN

[*Laughing.*] God help me, no, I have not learned that.

RECTOR BESENMEYER

[*Laughing.*] Then be glad, for you have nothing to unlearn. Trammelling and miserable is our learning to us. We have enough ruined brains and theologasters. They understand not their own books. Naught is gained by their *exercitiis, copulatis, summis,* and the like *labyrinthis.* With their *quæstiones* they will not extinguish hell, with their *distinctiones* they will not open the gates of heaven.

[1] William of Occam, who probably died at Munich in 1349.

MAYOR

Brother Rector!

RECTOR BESENMEYER

Here.

MAYOR

Know you Berlichingen by sight?

RECTOR BESENMEYER

Götz von Berlichingen with the iron hand?

MAYOR

He that sits yonder on that lean hack.

RECTOR BESENMEYER

That short little man?

MAYOR

That little nut-cracker. The one with whom he speaks is Henneberg.

MENZINGEN

Is Henneberg in the union too?

LÖFFELHOLZ

The Hennebergs are in the union, the Hohenlohes are in the union, the Wertheims and many others beside.

RECTOR BESENMEYER

I wonder what he is arguing about so eagerly.

MAYOR

God's light, what should it be? The affair of

the Bishop of Bamberg, with whom he hath been at odds this long time.

MARTIN

Would you hear it, Brother Rector? I will recite it to you word for word, and if you can find one old woman in the Franconian land that cannot reel it off like an Our Father, then let me be struck dead with a pumpkin-stake. . . . 'Tis said they would fain make Götz captain-in-chief over us all.

LÖFFELHOLZ

That is Jack Blowhard's idea. Götz is not much more than a wooden fire-poker and a prisoner in his own camp. He cannot even ease nature but there is someone to keep watch over him. What could he accomplish if they should make him captain over thirty thousand wild men?

MAYOR

He hath no marrow in his bones, not from head to foot.

MENZINGEN

Where lieth the evangelical army, brother?

LÖFFELHOLZ

At Hugberg and Randersacker.

RECTOR BESENMEYER

How many of the peasantry do you estimate as being in and about Würzburg?

MAYOR

Od's body, they could drink up the Main.

MENZINGEN

Think you that yon garrison will gird them for a serious defence and dare to hold the castle against such odds?

MAYOR

There is a brave number of good and experienced men in the fort.

LÖFFELHOLZ

[*To* MENZINGEN.] Wall-breaking cannon, brother, such as ye have in Rothenburg; we lack good pieces; fetch us your two culverins. When once a breach is made, then let God and Florian Geyer take care of the rest.

MARTIN

Brother, Florian Geyer knows more of warfare than all the other captains put together, and his black-coats can do more than any other company of the peasants. Whoever hath seen Geyer and his men at Weinsberg, he knows that I am speaking in the sight of God and the pure truth.

LÖFFELHOLZ

I was there too when they advanced to the attack. . . . Ye know that while we were negotiating with Helfenstein he played us the treacherous trick of sending his riders into our rear, cutting and burning. So soon as this was noised abroad in the camps, it was every man's opinion that we should show ourselves in earnest and attack with all our forces. Before that, however, we sent heralds to them, but these they shot down, contrary

to military custom and law. Came one of those sent forth, bleeding and with outcry, and now there was no holding us, every man rushed against the city wall. Now Florian Geyer stepped up to his black-coats and cried to them: "In half an hour we are dead, brothers, or the black flag floats on the keep." What shall I say, brothers, there are not more than four thousand men; but when they have thrown earth over their heads and cry "Come on, come on!" then I had rather meet the Devil. As quickly as three beads of a rosary might slip past your fingers, they broke into the vineyards, swarmed up the mountain, clung to the wall, and jumped over it like cats, threw down all before them, and flew the peasant flag from every tower. . . . [William von Grumbach *enters, in superb armour.*] Now take Götz, on the other hand, he won't nip the fox at any point. For him all the fords and ditches are too deep, and the morasses too wide. Let the Devil take him for commander.

Mayor

God grant that we choose the right man.

Martin

Hurrah for Florian Geyer! Victor of Weinsberg! Let Geyer be our captain!

Löffelholz

They do not all think as we do.

William von Grumbach

I bid you godspeed, gentlemen.

LÖFFELHOLZ

Gentility is over and done with; there are no gentlemen here. What wilt thou, brother?

WILLIAM VON GRUMBACH

Squire Florian von Geyer's field-clerk is the one I seek.

LÖFFELHOLZ

Then wilt thou find him as little as if thou hadst gone out to find the Devil's field-clerk.

WILLIAM VON GRUMBACH

By the sweat of God, where shall I find Laurence Löffelholz?

LÖFFELHOLZ

Pox, I am Laurence Löffelholz, but no nobleman's field-clerk am I. Thinkest thou I should sit and give my service—God knows that I am more dead than alive!—an it were in the service of the gentry?

MENZINGEN

God speed thee, William.

WILLIAM VON GRUMBACH

And the same to thee, Stephen.

MENZINGEN

[*To* LÖFFELHOLZ.] This is Squire von Grumbach, brother, whose sister Florian Geyer hath in marriage.

Löffelholz

What the devil care I? What wilt thou, brother?

William von Grumbach

In the camp at Heidingsfeld a letter of protection and safety was promised me.

Löffelholz

I thought as much! A poor knight begging for a safe-conduct.

William von Grumbach

[*Flaring up.*] Come now, clerk, note well who stands before thee.

Löffelholz

Wilt thou draw upon me? I know thou hast a sword. And I know who stands before me: a brother peasant stands before me. What is thy name, brother?

William von Grumbach

I am the knight William von Grumbach.

Löffelholz

Strike out thy coat-of-arms, brother. There is no good in that any more. Thou'lt be a peasant as well as I, no safe-conduct can protect thee from that. [Grumbach *takes the document, which is thrown to him like a bone to a dog, and suppresses his rage. He steps into an embrasure with* Menzingen *and speaks in an undertone with him.*] Nothing but retreat and entreaty among

our knighthood. Thinking only of saving their strong houses and their fields. Then look at Florian Geyer, he spares his own property in no wise. Now they have laid low his ancestral castle with fire, but he never moved an eyelash.

MAYOR

[*In a low voice to* LÖFFELHOLZ.] I thought Grumbach was in the garrison.

LÖFFELHOLZ

And were it so, I would congratulate the Bishop; there is no value in such brothers. They care naught for divine right. They seek their advantage, as ravens fly to carrion.

[*Bells begin to toll.*

MARTIN

[*At the door to the church.*] Brothers, the church is packed, the people stand shoulder to shoulder.

RECTOR BESENMEYER

Said you not that Father Ambrosius would preach?

MAYOR

Aye, Brother Rector.

RECTOR BESENMEYER

It is truly a great day, and now that I have seen it I will depart gladly and comforted.

LÖFFELHOLZ

Marry, dear brothers, fortune descends in great

flakes like snow, and God knows there is miracle enough. It is plain to see and can be grasped with the hand: God hath taken part in the struggle and hath had compassion on the wretched German nation.

Rector Besenmeyer

It is reported that at the spot where our Lord Jesus ascended into heaven, in the centre of the earth, there, they say, hangs a great bell; this shall one day toll loud and terrible; so loud and terrible shall be its peal that even the deaf will hear it. So then, unbutton your ears, ye tyrants and torturers of body and soul, and mark that your day of judgment is nearing.

[*Enter* Pastor Bubenleben.

Martin

[*In triumph.*] Dost hear the shouting, Brother Bubenleben? Florian Geyer rideth in.

Löffelholz

Brother Bubenleben, I hope that God will now open your eyes and show you whom he hath chosen for his hero in these times.

Bubenleben

[*Lays a printed document before* Löffelholz.] Here, read this: To the assembly of the peasantry of the German nation, proceeding from their brothers in the highlands. Here standeth written the same opinion by which I abide: the leaders should be peasants, the like of us. An we take in a man of gentle blood, we smuggle wolf's hair

into our sheep's wool. No rhyme nor reason in that, dear brothers.

MARTIN

[*At the window, in a frenzy of enthusiasm.*] Long live Geyer!

RECTOR BESENMEYER

[*Beside himself.*] Hurrah for St. George! Hurrah for St. George!

LÖFFELHOLZ

Sits he not upon his horse as straight and rigid as an arrow?

RECTOR BESENMEYER

Truly a right worthy captain before God.

MAYOR

Rust on his armour, but none on his sword.

RECTOR BESENMEYER

A flame of justice flows through his heart.

MARTIN

Hurrah for Geyer! Hurrah for Florian Geyer! [*He runs toward the church door.*] He hath entered the church.

RECTOR BESENMEYER

With all his followers.

MARTIN

He hath near a hundred followers with him in full armour.

[LÖFFELHOLZ *and the* MAYOR *whisper together.*

BUBENLEBEN

In this I trace hellish tyranny, but no sign of Christian humility.

[TELLERMANN, *in armour, enters in joyful intoxication of wine and the enthusiasm of* GEYER'S *reception.*

TELLERMANN

[*Stops; flourishes his sword on high.*] God greet you, dear brothers, God bless you, dear evangelical brothers. *Morbleu,* dear brothers. *J'ai gaigné mon procès. Entendez-vous?* The great day is here. *Écoutez, écoutez!* Do not look at me to see what I speak, how I speak. The wine hath crept into my head. Fortune hath crept into my heart. Brothers, [*Drumming on the table with his fists.*] now I am at home—and how we rode in! *Mort de ma vie,* priest! Now we are at home. But where art thou, Bishopkin? Hast had to take to thy heels, to flee from thy glory. *Bugre! larron! menteur! fils de putain! traître! faquin! brutal! bourreau!* Hast driven and chased us like mangy curs. *Outrage pour outrage!*

MAYOR

How do things look out in the street, brother?

TELLERMANN

[*Embracing him.*] Brotherkin, dear mayorkin, there is more of blessing than one can hold in his breast. God, God! What a happy return! O my, O my! Whoop! Hurrah for Florian Geyer! Supreme general over all the companies. A rogue, whoso will not drink my toast.

MAYOR

God grant it. I will drink with thee.

TELLERMANN

Morbleu! How they honoured him! At the Haugen Gate he stopped. 'Twas wide open like all the other gates. But he knocked on it just the same with his sword-hilt and shouted up at Our Lady's Mountain. "Here do I return home, I, Florian Geyer, outlawed by the Emperor and banned by the Pope, but by God awakened, chosen, and guided. Here do I return home, I, Florian Geyer, the friend of Sickingen and the foe of the priests, as I have promised and sworn to myself, and will not rest until I have pulled down to the ground thy high and proud castle, thou high and mighty, devilish priest, Konrad of Würzburg." Thus did he shout; and so we rode in. No end of cheering; they waved their scarves from all the windows. The women were ready to jump down into the streets, what with the cheering and the joy; his nag could hardly move along. They kissed his stirrups and licked the rust from his armour. The same squares and streets where his imperial Roman majesty had the decree of outlawry trumpeted, proclaimed, and cried against

us. [*Alluding to* Bubenleben.] What would the parson here? Into a sack, and under the knacker's bridge with them!

Mayor

Be quiet, brother, compose thyself, brother.

[*A* Canon, *serving as clerk, enters.*

Tellermann

God's blood, do I not know thee, wert thou not formerly a cursed canon? *Mort de ma vie!* Did not the Pope's messenger eat breakfast with thee after he damned my dead mother to hell?

Canon

O dear friend, good sir, you are truly mistaken.

Tellermann

Didst thou not carry firewood and pour oil, pitch, and sulphur upon it when they burned her on the square of the Jews? Come, I say, look at me. My name is Tellermann, I am a Beghard, I am a Waldensian, I am a disguised heretic. My dead mother wouldn't confess, so they strung her up by a hand's breadth for as long as it takes to say three paternosters. She did not confess, God forgive her. But I freely confess: I have always loved the Gospel more than human frippery. I deny it not: I am one of the free spirits. Free are we, because God hath freed us and scattered our oppressors, foes, and soul-murderers like chaff. We are free, because we have no conscience and are not tattered and torn by that wicked beast.

And, parson, therefore nothing prevents me from striking thee dead. . . .

MAYOR

Peace, peace!

TELLERMANN

[*Held in check by the* MAYOR *and others, shouts in frenzy.*] Kill, slay!

[*The* CANON *flees, and* TELLERMANN *sinks on a chair, exhausted and almost unconscious.*

MAYOR

It is Tellermann, son of a horse-dealer. Ten years ago they burned his mother here in Würzburg. So he lost control of himself just now, though otherwise there is no better soldier in the entire army than he. Geyer and he are hand and glove.

RECTOR BESENMEYER

A raving Ajax, brothers.

MAYOR

They're all through the army, you'll find a hundred as easy as one.

RECTOR BESENMEYER

Scourges of God!

MAYOR

Seed of the dragon's teeth, sown by Pope, cardinals, bishops, and priests, now sprung up to be their destruction.

Rector Besenmeyer

Hush now, Father Ambrosius is speaking.

[*From the church one can hear the intonation of a sermon, without understanding the words.*

[*Through the left side-door enter:* Sebastian von Rotenhahn, Wolf von Kastell, Hans von Lichtenstein, Hans von Grumbach, Kunz von der Mühlen. *They are led by* Sartorius.

Sartorius

[*Gravely stepping up to* Löffelholz, *who, engrossed in listening to the sermon, has not noticed his approach.*] You will pardon me . . . I have brought the delegation hither, O man of learning.

Löffelholz

Too early, brother.

Sartorius

This hour was appointed to me by Wendel Hippler, O man of learning.

Löffelholz

Bah, call me not man of learning, brother. We are all sinners and unknown to fame.

Sartorius

Marry, dear brother, you are right. [*They continue to speak together in an undertone. Meanwhile the group of the emissaries have been whispering to each other.* William von Grum-

BACH *has turned about and observed them. He judges* MENZINGEN, *and both look about them. As unobtrusively as possible, they move toward the emissaries.*

SEBASTIAN VON ROTENHAHN

[*Gloomily.*] By the love of God! have ye turned into black peasants?

WILLIAM VON GRUMBACH

I am here in the service of the Margrave of Ansbach.

SEBASTIAN VON ROTENHAHN

And yet thou hast the peasant cross on thy arm.

WILLIAM VON GRUMBACH

Of necessity, be it my pleasure or no. No getting through without it.

SEBASTIAN VON ROTENHAHN

Squire von Menzingen? Whence hath the Devil brought you here?

MENZINGEN

I am in the delegation of Rothenburg.

SEBASTIAN VON ROTENHAHN

And have you then become a citizen of Rothenburg?

MENZINGEN

Aye, to be sure, Squire. Did you not know that?

Sebastian von Rotenhahn

An I did not know it, yet do I understand only too well that ye seek protection behind the walls of the imperial cities.

Menzingen

You are pleased to jest, Sir Knight.

Sebastian von Rotenhahn

Was your name not one of those signed to the renunciation of Stuttgart by the exiled Duke Ulrich of Württemberg—issued before Helfenstein sent him about his business in so evil and masterly a fashion?

Menzingen

That quarrel is not yet at an end, Sir Knight. Helfenstein found it not very palatable. Had to give up his life at Weinsberg.

Sebastian von Rotenhahn

What, say you so!?—Then is that a true saying that is current among the people: namely, that the King of France and the lost prince [1] had shuffled the cards, that Geyer picked them off the table at Hohentwiel and dealt them out, and that was the beginning of the great peasant game?

Menzingen

You enquire about that?

Sebastian von Rotenhahn

In that case every drop of gentle blood shed

[1] The "lost prince" is Ulrich of Württemberg. Cf. note to p. 198.

at Weinsberg will one day be demanded of you.

[Menzingen *turns, shrugging his shoulders.*

Lichtenstein

Will that proud and lofty city, with its imperial charter, also mingle with these sweepings of humanity and join this hellish union?

Menzingen

That will be as God ordains, Sir Knight.

Hans von Grumbach

[*To* William.] Od's bodikins, cousin, shall we be foes to one another? What sense in that?

William von Grumbach

'Sdeath, Hans. Look thou to that.

Wolf von Kastell

Hath not the Bishop summoned thee to join the garrison?

William von Grumbach

I am bound to the service of the Margrave of Ansbach, and for him I must ride and rove.

Lichtenstein

The Squire of Grumbach hath never done otherwise: when he had ridden out his nags in the service of the Margrave, then they would soon be standing up to their necks in oats at the court of our Bishop.

William von Grumbach

God's guts, on the other hand I have not more

than five hundred swine fattening on acorns in Gramschatz, while the Bishop has two thousand, yet it is my forest. Moreover, his canons and servants shoot the game in my woods and fish in my streams.

Wolf von Kastell

If thou art unjustly burdened, thou hast a way to redress.

William von Grumbach

The priests do nothing for kindness unless you pull the wool over their eyes.

Wolf von Kastell

Is't not thy duty to march to the aid of the Bishop?

William von Grumbach

'Sbody! Truly the priest hath leather a-plenty, when the free knighthood of the empire bringeth its hide so cheaply and servilely to market. 'Tis not my duty to march to the Bishop in person: that is against the tradition among the Franconian gentry.

Hans von Grumbach

Hast thou not thy lands in fief from the Bishop?

William von Grumbach

Our fiefs are not granted by favour or for service; they are free fiefs.

Wolf von Kastell

[*To* Sartorius, *who advances.*] Such is doubtless your wisdom, Master?

SARTORIUS

I fear God and love my overlord, your worthiness. I serve his grace with my paternoster and good advice, so long as it please God and my gracious lord.

WILLIAM VON GRUMBACH

Well spoken, Master.

WOLF VON KASTELL

These jurists and counsellors, they are the plague; drive their lords into confusion and destruction. Devil take all red shoes.

MENZINGEN

Then look first of all upon your Bishop. He hath as many jurists hanging about him as there are shells on a Dominican.

SEBASTIAN VON ROTENHAHN

[*To* SARTORIUS.] The worst of this affair is: you will lose your veneration, Master.

SARTORIUS

That shall not grieve me, your highness.

SEBASTIAN VON ROTENHAHN

Though you escape the Bishop's hangman, you'll be all the sooner strung up on the peasants' gallows.

SARTORIUS

Is to be doubted, your worthiness. I do right

not for the sake of paltry recompense; and will not shun the right out of base fear.

HANS VON LICHTENSTEIN

The long and short of it is this: Squire von Grumbach is betraying his feudal lord.

WILLIAM VON GRUMBACH

The Emperor is my feudal lord and no Würzburg parson; I am no parson's slave.

SEBASTIAN VON ROTENHAHN

That is the tune they are all singing now. Whoever willeth the right and doeth good, him they call a parson's slave.

WILLIAM VON GRUMBACH

God's dirt, now all on a sudden, now I am good enough for the Bishop, now I am to defend his fat paunch, and the canons' silken bedding and their luxury. Let the Devil do that.

LÖFFELHOLZ

What are the knights discussing?

SARTORIUS

Retire, gentlemen, follow me. We have come too soon.

WOLF VON KASTELL

God's light, I could take my sword to them.

[*Led by* SARTORIUS, *they withdraw.*

RECTOR BESENMEYER

[*Still listening to the sermon.*] Father Am-

brosius closes his sermon with Latin. He directs the brothers and sisters to Wyclif's future evangelical state. *Tunc necessitaretur respublica redire ad politiam evangelicam, habens omnia in communi.*[1] . . . Bravo, brother, the force of God was in thy sermon. Truly, thou hast not spoken of blue ducks and of hens' milk. Not like other days at Erfurt in the dormitory, when I was in training and had to swallow every day a speech about the Virgin.

[*The congregation sings in the church. At the beginning of the hymn* Tellermann *has sprung to his feet. Calmly and in groups, the peasant captains and counsellors, coming from the church, now enter the chapter-hall. They whisper and converse with animation, but unintelligibly. The knights are observed and eyed with distrust. Among those entering is* Wendel Hippler, *who at once begins to argue with* Löffelholz, *gesticulating violently. He is treated with the utmost respect by most.* Sartorius, *having reentered, devotes respectful attention to him. Fat* Jacob Kohl *has also come in. He at once enters into conversation with* Bubenleben. *It can be seen that they are dissatisfied, indeed indignant at something. A black and yellow flag and one of white damask are brought in; upon one there is a sun and a laced boot*

[1] "Then it might be necessary for the government to return to an evangelical system, having all things in common."

embroidered in gold thread, with the legend: "Whoso would be free, let him enter this sunshine." Götz von Berlichingen, *who attracts scarcely any other than malicious attention, enters in conversation with* George Metzler. *They approach* Hippler *and form a group with him and* Sartorius. Götz *appears morose and negative.* William von Grumbach *joins this group and exchanges greetings with* Götz *and* Count George von Wertheim, *who has also come up.* Flammenbecker, *a man of Weinsberg, gesticulates wildly among some comrades.* Link, *of Würzburg, has also formed a little group. On the whole there is revealed, despite their exaltation, a certain concern, agitation, even suspense.* Florian Geyer, *in black armour and with black ostrich plumes on his helmet, enters with a large following. Two black banners are borne along behind him. At* Geyer's *entrance the singing in the church ceases, the bells cease tolling, and it suddenly becomes as still as death in the chapter-hall.* Konrad von Hanstein *has entered at* Geyer's *side.*

Florian Geyer

[*To* Hanstein.] The old imperial privilege confirms this for us. The common freemen have the right of federation. We are free Franconians, and moreover: have the princes not founded the district union and the league of Regensburg against

our evangelical doctrine? Union against union! The princes will not concede it; that's due to the cursed scholars and the Roman jurists. I believe no tyrant ever did so much harm as Justinian. This alien, foreign law hath descended upon us like a flood. Give me our German tradition, the open ring instead of the clerk's office.

RECTOR BESENMEYER

[*With emotion and reverence.*] Do you still know me, Brother Geyer?

FLORIAN GEYER

Od's bodikins, should I not know you, Rector Besenmeyer? Did I not hold muster among your infantry? Was it not in Philip Tuchscheerer's house in Rothenburg that we thrust our legs under the same table? What of Karlstadt?

RECTOR BESENMEYER

He would fain come to your camp; the sooner, the better.

FLORIAN GEYER

God forbid! You wish him well, and our cause too, so see to it that he gives up his plan. We have preachers more than enow in our camps. Affairs of faith and heavenly things we must leave behind us for the nonce, we must mingle no theology with our warfare and look only to earthly things.

BUBENLEBEN

[*To* KOHL.] Fie, what a scoundrelly, hellish

kind of truth! He hath eaten up St. Valentine's [1] school-bag.

KOHL

Look at the rector, how he compliments Geyer and kisses his hand.

BUBENLEBEN

Friend, I know that stinking Bacchante only too well. His God is Aristotle; Cicero, Virgil, and Livy are his saints. A good knowledge of Latin is worth more to him than all of Christianity.

[*Overcome with emotion,* BESENMEYER *has kissed* GEYER'S *hand.*

FLORIAN GEYER

But what are you doing, dear father! I will do that to you. I am an unpolished and unlearned man. And hath not even our glorious and most illustrious Emperor Max [2] declared that it was the learned ones that should rule and not be subject and to whom the greatest honour was due, because God and Nature had preferred them to ourselves?

RECTOR BESENMEYER

Let be, brother. It giveth comfort to my poor soul. Do you still recall how we had that symposium together, at the house of Mutian in Gotha? You had Ulrich von Hutten sitting at your right

[1] See note to p. 18.

[2] Maximilian I, 1459–1519, "the last knight," friend and patron of Albrecht Dürer; the German nation saw realised in him its ideal of what an emperor should be.

and me at your left. Eitelfritz von Zollern sat facing us.

FLORIAN GEYER

I remember it well.

RECTOR BESENMEYER

[*With restrained enthusiasm.*] And do you recall how you stood up on that occasion, withdrew the wreath from your hair, and cried out: "It is too early to deck oneself with roses, seeing that the Antichrist at Rome is still fattening himself upon our marrow, that the German Emperor must beg for bread, that justice can be bought with money, that lasting peace is but a word upon paper, and that the Gospel is suppressed." Where stood we at that time, and where stand we now?

FLORIAN GEYER

[*Happily.*] The bell-casting is done, and the piper may blow his tune: let us thank God in heaven for that.

MARTIN

[*Carried away.*] For that we thank God and Florian Geyer.

[GEYER *takes a seat at the upper end of the table; behind him* TELLERMANN *and the* MAYOR *take their stand, to his right sits* HIPPLER, *to his left* LÖFFELHOLZ; *behind the latter stands* MARTIN, *awaiting his signal.* HIPPLER *moves up a chair beside him for* SARTORIUS. SARTORIUS *seats himself with many humble*

obeisances. Hanstein *has engaged* Grumbach *and* Menzingen *in conversation.*

Löffelholz

[*Rising.*] Brothers, captains, and counsellors, be seated. There is much to be considered, devised, and decided. Be seated, dear evangelical brothers. Be seated.

[Götz von Berlichingen *seats himself at the same time as* George von Wertheim, Count von Henneberg, George Metzler, *and others. Heralds trumpet a fanfare.*

Florian Geyer

[*Rising at the conclusion of the fanfare.*] The general council of all the companies of the common peasantry in and about Würzburg is now begun.

Löffelholz

Very much work, brothers! Much to consider and decide. There have come messengers and messages from Hohenlohe, Nuremberg, from many places in the Upper Palatinate, from Bamberg, from Mayence, from Strassburg; from the camp of the Steward of Waldburg we have information, from Alsace, from the Tyrol, from Salzburg, from Thomas Münzer in Thuringia, and from divers other persons and places. All demanding an answer. There is a lack of clerks in the office, but yet I have never had more joy of my pen. Margrave Casimir hath sent messengers from Ansbach, and here are the credentials—waiting in the

sacristy. Rothenburg-ob-der-Tauber hath sent a delegation—waiting in the sacristy. Finally an answer is demanded by the embassy which the Provost Margrave of Our Lady's Mountain hath sent to the assembly of the common peasantry in the interest of peaceful agreement—waiting in the sacristy. It is my opinion, brothers, that we should first give heed to these last.

FLAMMENBECKER

[*Lolling morosely.*] We should pay no heed to anything unless the garrison surrender the castle with all that is in it.

BUBENLEBEN

[*Casually.*] I say Yes and Amen to that, and let the garrison march out with guarantee of life and limb.

GÖTZ

[*Half aside, half to the others.*] What more should one demand than what the garrison on Our Lady's Mountain hath voluntarily offered? They agree to accept the "twelve articles" upon the faith of their handshakes and be our brothers in the Gospel.

FLAMMENBECKER

Shallow mockery, od's lungs!

BUBENLEBEN

One crow will not peck the other's eyes out. No knight should be trusted in this matter.

LINK

One leper scratches the other very gently. Our Brother of Berlichingen hath good comrades and friends in the castle: there's the rub, brothers!

GÖTZ

One should not lie inactive before strong castles. What we need is to move onward.

BUBENLEBEN

What he wants is that we should break camp, the sooner the better, and march against his old foe of Bamberg.

GEYER

Our Brother Götz is right; I cannot find it unreasonable. If they of the garrison will promise to swear by the articles, pox, let us be content. We lack cannon to pierce the walls; without them there is nothing to be accomplished, we cannot harm the fortress.

LINK

Brothers, I am of Würzburg; but the men of Würzburg are of one mind: the castle must be rased. Thou sayest cannon, Brother Geyer. There stands Brother von Wertheim, hath promised us cannon, and therewith we intend, an God will, to do our work swiftly. The garrison is to have the hoops on their barrel drawn so tight that they shall spring out like fish and yield them to our mercy. But if ye march to Bamberg or Ansbach without having stormed the castle, then we of Würzburg have worse to expect of the

Bishop's men than hath ever been heard of ere now.

HIPPLER

Then let us take a vote. Whoso is of opinion that we should accept the offer of the garrison, let him lift his hand. [GÖTZ, GEYER, HIPPLER, TELLERMANN, METZLER, LÖFFELHOLZ, SARTORIUS, WERTHEIM, HENNEBERG, *etc., raise their hands. It is a small minority.*] Now the contrary-minded.

[*The great majority raise their hands.*

[SARTORIUS, *at* HIPPLER'S *suggestion, rises, goes out, and returns with the embassy:* SEBASTIAN VON ROTENHAHN, WOLF VON KASTELL, HANS VON LICHTENSTEIN, KUNZ VON DER MÜHLEN *enter. It grows quiet, the peasant captains loll about and act as supercilious and contemptuous as possible.*

HIPPLER

[*Sitting, to the standing embassy.*] The assembly of the common peasantry demands of you that ye should surrender the castle Our Lady's Mountain and all fixed and movable possessions therein, in return for assurance of safe departure for yourselves, your servants, and men.

SEBASTIAN VON ROTENHAHN

[*After some reflection.*] We have no authority to promise this. But we will promise to send your demand to the abiding-place of our gracious lord and Bishop by swift messenger—

LINK

Thus our mouths are stopped with assemblies, embassies riding back and forth, and all these cursed Italian subterfuges and wiles, and to no purpose save to delay us and gain time and occasion for resistance. Ye shall be made to feel we are in earnest and our Ave Maria will be sent into your fort with grape-shot.

GÖTZ

If the peasantry is of a mind to play here at Würzburg so horrible and God-cursed a rôle as was lately done at Weinsberg, to the irrevocable shame and injury of the common peasant cause, then I have no part in it. [*Excitement.*

BUBENLEBEN

I ask you here and now, Brother Götz, and thee, Brother Metzler: hath the Provost Margrave offered you money to withdraw or no?—Come straight out with your answer.—'Tis said the garrison would have bargained with you alone, and that three thousand florins should be paid therefor to the captains of the troops and half a month's wages to each man.

GÖTZ

Captains and counsellors of the Odenwald army are not required to give account to any save the total assembly of their own troops.

[*Excitement.*

LINK

Fie, for shame.

FLAMMENBECKER

Damned swindler! Down with him!

LINK

To the knacker with Götz!

GEYER

[*Springs up.*] Brothers, are we people that fight for profit, or have we taken oath together to stand by the Gospel and the Word of God? Are we land-grabbers and purse-stealers, or free German men and Christians who have built up their undertaking on the hope that peace, freedom, unity, and safety of trade and travel might begin in the German nation and be preserved?—[*To the embassy.*] The Provost Margrave offers money for retreat. Will he buy off our honour? Up, gentlemen, and bring him this answer: the Pope bartereth away Christendom; the German princes barter away the German imperial crown; but the German peasants will not barter away their evangelical freedom. [*Applause.*

SEBASTIAN VON ROTENHAHN

Evangelical freedom hath better servants than you.

GEYER

God grant and will it! But ye are wholly enslaved to Rome and the parsons. Ulrich von Hutten was a better man than I; he dedicated the *Trias romana* to you, but ye were not worth it.

SEBASTIAN VON ROTENHAHN

I set myself not against Emperor and realm.

GEYER

Nor do we, never and in no wise. Our undertaking hath only this aim, to restore to the Emperor his old power, regardless of priests and princes. Ye set yourselves against the Emperor, ye that give aid to priests and princes. What were the words of our noble Emperor Max: that priests and princes had fettered him at Worms and hanged him on a nail. Deeds of priests and princes for Emperor and realm? Grapes from thistles! If the Emperor understood the truth: here are his allies.

SEBASTIAN VON ROTENHAHN

God's blood! What a burden of shame you are shaping for yourself, you that were once an honest knight of the gentry.

GEYER

[*Removing his helmet and showing his shorn head.*] A peasant am I and nothing but a peasant.

SEBASTIAN VON ROTENHAHN

By the honours of my nobility . . .

GEYER

Centaurs ye are, but not noblemen. Where were the honours of your nobility when the noble Francis of Sickingen,[1] the highest model of all

1 Franz von Sickingen, 1481–1523, was one of the most notable figures of the first period of the Reformation. He had a large scheme to overthrow the spiritual princes and elevate the order of knighthood. He declared war upon his old enemy, the Archbishop of Treves, but was defeated and mortally wounded in the fighting.

knightly virtues, staked all and lost against the priest of Treves? That was when a noblemen's war should have set in. Where was your help in the hour of need? Into an old armour-crate they stuffed the body of noble Sickingen, cooks and minstrels dragged it with ropes down the mountain. Where was your knightly honour then? Your name and honour: a handful of wind, blown into the air by priests and princes.

[*The embassy has withdrawn.*

WOLF VON KASTELL

[*In the doorway, shouts back.*] Men, beware of Geyer! He is the secret servant of the French, he will betray you to the French.

[*Exit with the embassy.*

TELLERMANN

Shall I attack them, Captain?

GEYER

Easy, brother, pitch and sulphur enow hath run over my harness. Take good care that safe escort be accorded them until they are back in their shelter.

FIRST HALBERDIER

[*Enters, reports.*] Captain, many hundred women have banded together and taken a stand on both banks of the Main. Are minded to restrain the embassy as it rides back, swear they will not let it re-enter the fortress unless the Devil should hinder them, but will pull from their horses every man that holds to the priests and throw him into the Rhine.

GEYER

Thunder and lightning, what trouble we have with petticoats! Quick, raise up gallows. Have the provost let loose upon them and string up in a jiffy whoever will not obey.

FLAMMENBECKER

Thou hast not obtained whip and gallows from the Emperor's majesty.

LINK

Brothers, now is a single hour of waiting too long. Now quickly forward. With all the might of the peasantry, with cannon, battering-ram, target, and ladder, let us go against the castle. On, on! with power and God's might, so that they may truly see our grim intent and that knights and men in the garrison may feel their blood run cold. Bang at them with the cannon . . .

LÖFFELHOLZ

With what cannon shall we bang at them?—Hearken to me, dear brothers. One thing above all is needful to us now, and if so be ye are of the same opinion and God gives you light, then at this very hour He will put the decisive move into your hands. I think ye know me sufficiently well. I have always loved our evangelical freedom with all my heart. This handful of blood within my breast I will gladly devote to the cause. . . . God hath hitherto led us fortunately and well. All the great leaders are ducking and the mighty boasters taking to their heels. And yet my heart

will not swell and grow merry. An evil foreboding hovers within me, even though I know not why. . . . Brothers, there must be a supreme will. We must choose a leader over us, and make one man the commander over all the companies of the peasantry. A disunited pair will overturn the plough. One will is often more than a thousand, one hand often more than a hundred, and while ye are taking vote three times a day, the mob in the army pays no heed whatever and makes of all your orders and articles a mock, a disgrace, and a laughing-stock. . . . The Steward of Waldburg stands in opposition to us with the army of the Swabian League, all equipped. It is highly necessary that we take measures against him betimes. There is a single man and a single strong will, squadrons of cavalry and infantry, a stern and strict discipline, a mighty army of men, experienced from service in the field. So it is my proposal and opinion that we should choose and elect Florian Geyer as the commander of the common peasantry, say for one year. We should give him counsellors—— [*Commotion.*

METZLER

Götz von Berlichingen should be our captain.

BUBENLEBEN

[*Springs up.*] Brothers, we should not put any nobleman over us. Like holds to like. A hawk can never become a dove, and a knight can never turn into an evangelical peasant. There should be no knight at all sitting in this council.

TELLERMANN

[*Has returned; shouts back.*] No parson should sit in our council.

BUBENLEBEN

Well now, it is notorious that you Geyers set but little store by the word of God. Nor doth it surprise me, seeing ye fight under the black banner. Have ye not served in the godless *bande noire,* wherein there is nothing but outlaws, blasphemers, and heathen? Ye would fain dethrone God, but we would enthrone Him and serve Him alone. So God will raise up for us a hero, when the hour comes. . . .

LÖFFELHOLZ

[*Interrupting.*] And when he is already sitting among you, ye see him not.

BUBENLEBEN

[*Fanatically.*] God will prepare a hero fitted for the great work. He will thrust from their thrones the Moabs, Agags, Ahabs, Phalarises, and Neros of this age, and give them the baptism of blood. The child of common folk will he be and none of the knights who, though they are armoured in iron, walk as softly and cautiously as cats on a ridge-pole. They spare their own people in every way; but cursed is every believer who holds his sword aloof from the blood of the adversaries of Christ. Now it is for us to bathe our hands in their blood and sanctify them therein.

MAYOR

The priest is possessed.

BUBENLEBEN

An ye would now choose a man to be chief captain, then choose . . .

MAYOR

[*Quickly.*] Brother Bubenleben, pastor at Mergentheim. [*Laughter.*

BUBENLEBEN

No, not me, but the man whom the Franconian company hath taken as leader, Jacob Kohl of Eifelstatt.

LÖFFELHOLZ

[*Interjects.*] He knows all the great oaths.

TELLERMANN

Fat as he is, yet doth he hang from the parson's girdle.

GEYER

[*Rises.*

Who'd have his dwelling free from blame
Keeps priests and monks from out the same.

[GEYER's *resolute movement creates a sensation in the assembly. Hereafter they observe him sharply. He speaks confidentially with* TELLERMANN, *the* MAYOR, *and* LÖFFELHOLZ. HIPPLER *and* GÖTZ *whisper and observe likewise. The* MAYOR *and* TELLERMANN *talk at* GEYER *with ever more vehement gestures.*

KOHL

Brothers, though little Löffelholz grow wild, that disturbs me not a whit. My peasant brothers know me.

MARTIN

[*Interjects.*] Aye, from the alehouse.

KOHL

Od! May the lightning strike thee. Shall I deny that wine tastes as good to me as to any knight? The Devil would bless me for that lie. Thinkest thou one should not sit in the alehouse, but always walk with his nose in the air and on stilts, and think himself better than his peasant brothers in the open ranks? Shall one always be puffing himself up, as the Geyers do? "Hey there, get out of the road, for I am coming!" That I will not do. All about me is pure as glass.

MARTIN

[*Interjects.*] Aye, from the alehouse.

[*Laughter.*

KOHL

That's what I say, pure as glass is everything about me.

A VOICE

Wine of a Würzburg Jew.

KOHL

Not wine of a Würzburg Jew, but pure as glass. I go according to my oath, and when I am ordered by the whole troop: Do that! then I do it, and:

Withhold thy hand from the other! then I withhold it. Secret wiles and traitorous proposals do not come from me. If I am chosen, I am chosen; if I am not chosen, then I had liefer rot on the gallows, or let the knacker burn the heart out of my body, ere I would submit to tyrannical power.

LÖFFELHOLZ

Who submits to such power here?

KOHL

Brother, ask that question of Florian Geyer.

FLAMMENBECKER

Brothers, we need no captain over us all. Do we therefore thrust the petty tyrants from their thrones that we may seat greater ones upon them? There are people here among us who will not suppress their masterful and devilish lusts. They set provosts over us, jailers and hangmen. They think to rule us with provosts, worse and more cruel than there were under the Papacy. They have erected gallows here at Würzburg.

GEYER

[*Interjects with a shout.*] More gallows, and hang upon them all the assassins of Weinsberg!

FLAMMENBECKER

[*Raging.*] Hang all squires, land-grabbers, and outlaws upon them. To the Devil with all yellow spurs. One must make you run the gauntlet like Helfenstein, cut you in quarters as accursed traitors and criminals.

[*Laughter among the knights.*

HIPPLER

Brother Geyer, answer this question. The rumour goeth that your men held an assembly; that captains, leaders, and sergeants of the black troop put pressure on them and persuaded every man contrary to discipline; and that it was resolved in the ring: to wit, they would in no wise endure any other unless you, Brother Geyer, should be set as supreme field-captain over all the troops.

GEYER

I know nothing of it; what concern is that of mine?

GÖTZ

Brothers, what do the guards before the church portals signify to us? Send them home.

LINK

Whom do they serve?

FLAMMENBECKER

They are from the black troop, they serve Florian Geyer.

BUBENLEBEN

Brothers, what is to come of this? Not far from here in the street I came upon a strong company of armed men.

LÖFFELHOLZ

They are bound for the cloister of the Barefoot Brothers, are to take up their quarters there in the interest of peace and order, that we may not

have, here at Würzburg, plundering, stealing, and injury to life and goods in such Turkish fashion as hath prevailed otherwhere.

LINK

The citizenry hath caused a goodly company to be mustered from all quarters and hath stationed it in the Barefoot Brothers' cloister. So shall we ourselves know how to maintain order and peace.

MAYOR

Aye, Link, the company in the Barefoot cloister outdoeth all others in pillaging, demanding ransom, and running through the houses. And were it not so, yet are there enough ne'er-do-wells among all the peasant companies; vagrants, profligates, and other rabble are forever weaving in and out through the gates. For that it is good medicine that one show them their own government and call out peasantry against peasantry.

LINK

Will not go down well with our citizenry here at Würzburg.

FLAMMENBECKER

There be no ne'er-do-wells in the rank and file!

GEYER

Though it go down well or ill with the citizenry, it is needful that we begin betimes to pound order and discipline into the ranks. An we let the Devil hold further sway with destruction of provisions, emptying corn into the Main, letting wine

run out of the casks, of a truth it will soon come to such a pass, upon my soul, that an evangelical brother in the ranks will have to dig with bleeding fingers for the wherewithal to still his hunger.

Götz

What said I, brothers? An the Geyers join us, then discord begins and no longer comes to any end.

Geyer

Brother of Berlichingen, who hath sowed more discord in the ranks, I or you?

Götz

Every man bows and bends his neck; the Geyers alone abide by their own ideas, paying no heed to the common cause.

Tellermann

God's pyne, Brother Götz, did ye think of us, tell me that, when you and Metzler went marching where we and the black troop had gone before? Nine cities of the Odenwald had opened to us and promised their aid. That was Florian Geyer's doing; no citizen had a window broken by our men, no maid her apron rumpled. But afterward came ye, pillaged everything, fell upon chests and cellars, violated women, caused many hundred wagons of plunder to be carried away. Brothers, when that became noised abroad in the whole assembly of the black troop, what wonder that a rage fell upon them? Thus it was that *ye* sowed discord among the brothers. The cities that had tied themselves to us with oaths and

duties, ye treated so that they must break oaths and duties and ally themselves with you.

GÖTZ

Should one let you go your ways, ye Geyers, there would arise over night more foes to our beloved evangelical freedom than there are shopkeepers in Venice, sots in Saxony, pigs in Pomerania, and whores in Bamberg all taken together.

GEYER

Do you know yet more, Brother Götz?

GÖTZ

Ye have made enemies for us of the whole gentry.

GEYER

I have executed the letter of the twelve articles.

GÖTZ

Natheless there was no need. You were formerly a knight yourself. Is it not shameful, brother, that you outdo all others in tearing down strong castles and houses of the gentry, seeing that you make obeisance to any filthy shopkeeper if he only threaten by dropping the tassel of his nightcap over the city wall? The houses of the gentry . . .

GEYER

Down with them, down with all the cursed ravens' nests! There must be an end of ambushing and hedge-hiding. My quondam good comrades of the gentry shall learn to do something

better than hanging two legs over a horse, fighting for profit, grinding and plundering peasants, running down merchants, putting them in bonds or casting them into stinking dungeons, hacking off their hands, hewing off their ears, and the like knightly actions. Ye shall henceforth have one door, till the soil, and go on foot like other Christian folk. The squire is no more . . .

Götz

What think you of the word of a nobleman, brother?

Geyer

As of every man's word, that a word is a word.

Götz

Think of Megmühlen, when thou wert still the appointed captain of the Swabian League. What curs of the League had promised me escort and broke faith?

Geyer

Take a spoon and eat that lie.

Hippler

[*Rises.*] Peace, brothers!—[***Shots are heard.***] Pox, what is that?

Götz

Aha, trickery!

Shouts

[*In confusion.*] Trickery! Treason!

Chorus of Shouts from Without

Hurrah for Florian Geyer!

[*Tumult and panic in the entire assembly.*

Shouts

Treason! Mutiny!

Geyer

[*Springs up, shouts.*] Peace, brothers! A cur is he that speaks of treason. Here I stand and swear that I will not accept office nor appointment, nor take it in hand, unless that it were assigned to me by the assembled council of the common peasant brotherhood. And whomsoever they make supreme over us all, to him will I bow in obedience and be subject, as is befitting and proper for an evangelical brother. But I am of opinion, dear brothers, that a council of war should be chosen, with well-informed and experienced men therein, and cause it to consider what is and is not to be done both within and without. Whoso is of opinion that that should be done, let him strike his knife into this ring.

[*He thrusts his knife into a circle that he has previously drawn on the church door with chalk.* Geyer's *example is followed by about five captains.*

Tellermann

[*Drawing his knife.*] For the Steward of Waldburg, appointed supreme captain of the Swabian League, straight through the heart.

[*He strikes home.*

Bubenleben

Into the heart of Bishop Konrad of Tübingen.
[*Likewise.*

Flammenbecker

For George Steward of Waldburg, appointed supreme captain of the Swabian League, the Bloody Hound of Wurzach, straight through the heart. [*Likewise.*

One of Weinsberg

Vengeance for Wurzach! Vengeance for the seven thousand brothers murdered! Straight to the heart of the Steward of Waldburg!
[*Likewise.*

Löffelholz

Straight to the heart of all Fuggers and Welsers![1] [*Likewise.*

Sartorius

Straight to the heart of our German discord!
[*Likewise.*

First Peasant Captain

Straight to the heart of all flayers and grinders of the people! [*Likewise.*

Second Peasant Captain

[*To* Grumbach.] Haste thee, brother, let loose thy saying.

[1] Celebrated banking families.

MARTIN

Straight to the heart of all priestly kings and kingly priests! [*Likewise.*

WILLIAM VON GRUMBACH

To the heart of Bishop Konrad of Würzburg! [*Likewise.*

HIPPLER

For the chancellor of the Dukes of Bavaria, appointed counsellor of the Swabian League, the God-accursed Leonhart Eck, straight to the heart. [*Likewise.*

THIRD PEASANT CAPTAIN

To the heart of the Steward of Waldburg! [*Likewise.*

THE CURTAIN FALLS

THE SECOND ACT

The tap-room of KRATZER'S *tavern on the market-place of Rothenburg. At the right a door to the corridor, in the rear wall windows which when opened afford a view of the market-place and the city hall. In the right foreground a small door into an adjoining room. A wall-settle and many crowded tables. A* BAGPIPER *stands by the door-post. All those present, including the innkeeper* KRATZER *and the* WAITRESS, *look attentively at* BESENMEYER, *who is occupied with* BLACK MOLLY.

RECTOR BESENMEYER

Sit down, child. There. Thy head against the stove. There. And here . . . hold fast to this. Else will she surely fall off the bench like a wooden image of the Virgin.

KRATZER

Where came you upon the girl, Brother Rector?

FIRST CITIZEN

[*Table 1.*] Brother Rector doth alway have minstrels and poor vagrants hanging about him. He hath too tender a heart.

SECOND CITIZEN

[*Table 1.*] She is of the Gipsies or the Bohemians.

THIRD CITIZEN

How did she get in?

Rector Besenmeyer

Dragged herself into the town, God knows how. Mother Mary, a pitiful creature. Bleeding feet and bleeding hands.

Kratzer

What hath she bound up in her shawl? [*The shawl slips out of her hands.*]—Crabs!

Rector Besenmeyer

Divinavit! True enough. *Pruriunt mihi dentes:* my mouth watereth. Speak, girl, speak. For all men is it seemly that they strive with all diligence not to live out their lives in silence like the beasts, sayeth Sallust. She recketh naught of Sallust! Do ye also reck naught of her, let her sleep!—

[*A great and universal tumult sets in; attention is diverted from* Molly, *who remains lying asleep on the stove-bench. The* Bagpiper *plays an air, the* Waitress *runs about with jugs of wine, likewise the* Innkeeper. *There is eager drinking and dispute.*

First Citizen

[*Table 1.*] Go on home with you! We've got a supreme court.[1]

[*He slams a card on the table.*

[1] Allusions to certain reforms of the late 15th century, which turned out so badly as to be ridiculed by all. Luther fulminated against the indulgences.

Second Citizen

[*Table 1.*] We've got a minting privilege.
[*Follows suit.*

Hans the Shepherd

For what do ye play?

Third Citizen

[*Table 1.*] For an indulgence, Brother Jack.

First Citizen

[*Table 1.*] Shake thy sleeve, Hans.

Hans the Shepherd

All hath dripped down my collar, not a paltry farthing saved of my pay.

Second Citizen

[*Table 1.*] Whom didst thou last serve?

Hans the Shepherd

I was the Emperor's; under George Frondsberg I helped smear the French, down in Italy, at Pavia. Thereafter the Swabian League[1] would have had me on half-pay. That liked me not, I would not be used against my peasant brothers.

[1] The Swabian League, 1488–1534, formed by knights, cities, and princes to preserve the peace established in 1486. It had a considerable army of foot and horse, and its own court. It helped to drive out Ulrich of Württemberg in 1519 (see note to p. 61) and handed his land over to the Emperor.

SECOND CITIZEN

[*Table 1.*] I puke on the Swabian League and on George the Steward to boot.

HANS THE SHEPHERD

Bootlace! Bootlace!

FIRST CITIZEN

[*Table 2, shouts.*] Gospel, Gospel!

A DRUNKARD

[*Howls.*] O Carly, Emperor of the land, Be thou the first to try thy hand, For God will surely by thee stand.

FIRST CITIZEN

[*Table 2, shouts.*] Gospel, Gospel!

SECOND CITIZEN

[*Table 2.*] Now there'll be no more dallying with priests and monks.

KRATZER

[*Stepping up to table 2.*] The Devil made the first monk, the ox it was that christened him.

THIRD CITIZEN

[*Table 2.*] And yet ye will not do away with priests and cloisters. There's no weeding out the weeds.

KRATZER

The cloisters are now as empty as sheep-barns in summer.

Renegade Monk

But where monks or nuns will not leave willingly, then one should bind them hand and foot and carry them out like dogs. They sit in the Devil's jaws.

Kratzer

[*Feeling the* Monk's *crown.*] Thine own tonsure is not grown over so long ago.

Renegade Monk

Cursed be the day on which the cowl and all tonsured sanctity was devised. I have cast them off like the Devil's livery. I will work and earn my bread of the peasant.

Kratzer

[*To* Hans.] Goest thou with the guns, Hans?

Hans the Shepherd

Devil take the man, master, that goeth not with the guns. Give me a sparkling Joham.[1]

Second Citizen

[*Table 2.*] Doctor Luther saw the Devil in the shape of a sow. I think he looked too deep into the jug.

Pedlar

[*Calling out from the door of the corridor.*] Who'll buy, who'll buy the Reformation of Emperor Sigismund, called the trumpet of the peasant war: obedience is death, and justice suffereth.

[1] A kind of brandy.

HANS THE SHEPHERD

Eat, hairdresser; sh——, tattle-tale.
[*He drinks brandy.*

PEDLAR

What, wilt thou shut my mouth, as did Luther to Karlstadt or to Münzer, the prophet of God? [*Continuing to call.*] Who'll buy, read the great prophet Münzer's defence against the raging bull of Wittenberg, Martinum Lutherum: "Thou hast entangled all Christendom, and now that need arises, thou canst not set it right. Therefore playest thou the rôle of prince, therefore wilt thou fare as doth a captive fox. The folk hath become free, and God alone will be Lord thereof." [*Going farther and calling.*] Judas in Rome, Simon in Rome, Sodom in Rome. [*To Table 2.*] Put away your Bibles, brothers, the city clerk passeth by; the honourables of Rothenburg will not allow that the Bible should be the subject of dispute in the tavern.

SECOND CITIZEN

[*Table 2.*] What their mightinesses, the honourables of Rothenburg, bid or forbid, that I heed as much as if a goose did hiss at me.

PEDLAR

[*Confidentially, to Table 2.*] Have ye heard? Jacob Schmidt in Kitzingen hath dug up out of her grave Saint Hedalogis, a virgin from England, and played at bowls with her skull.

THE BLIND MONK

[*By name* HANS SCHMIDT, *led along by a little girl.*] *Bona dies!*

KRATZER

Deo gratias.

NUMEROUS VOICES

The blind monk.

THE BLIND MONK

[*Feigning humility.*] *Panem propter deum.*[1] [*Laughter.*

HANS THE SHEPHERD

Bootlace, bootlace!

KRATZER

[*Entering into the jest.*] A wolf a priest, a monk a rogue. Drive him out. Throw a four-pound stone after him.

FIRST SERF

Don't expect nothing good from no monk's cowl.

FIRST CITIZEN

[*Table 1.*] Speak, thou cheesy monk, preach us a pious tale. Haply thou'st knocked out one of the Devil's molar teeth or hast seen him as a burning wisp of straw.

1 "Bread, for the love of God."

First Serf

For what sweating or bleeding cross beggest thou?

The Blind Monk

[*With feigned sighs.*] Bad times, ah, most evilly bad times. Pray to holy Christopher, that he may carry you on his shoulders through the terrible flood of this age. And ye there, eat consecrated salt and sprinkle yourselves six times a day with holy water, that the hellish spirit may not affront you.

First Citizen

[*Table 2.*] Hi, dear red fox, who shall consecrate the salt and the water for us? There is no longer a priest in Rothenburg to do it.

The Blind Monk

[*With simulated indignation.*] That is the doing of Karlstadt, the heretic and rogue. Drive him out.

Kratzer

Come, fox, give answer: is it true, what the parsons say: The Holy Father is over the angels in heaven and the Devil in hell and hath command over them?

The Blind Monk

Oh, thou worthless, heretical cub and criminal! Who'll wager thou'rt not a student of Prague and hast spooned up the same pestilential Hussite soup with Luther and Karlstadt. [*He grasps*

Kratzer.] He bristles with the spirit of Wyclif, he is teeming with the leprosy of Huss, he rages now worse than the sweating-sickness, maketh the people sheer mad and frenzied: they buy no absolution and will hear no mass. [*Laughter.*] Laugh not: beware of mortal sin. Beware of the hellish, abysmal, devilish, desperate,. factious spirits that go about these days and destroy mankind. Making an outcry among the people: the year of jubilee is at the door. Urging it upon their hearts as if Barbarossa [1] were to come again, as if the Saviour himself were to return upon earth and give us naught but peace and joy for a thousand years.—God help you, ye poor blind Antichrists. An that were to come to pass, what should the poor potter at Rome do with all his clay idols? Who will then continue to eat the flesh offered to idols? Who go to mass? Fill the church treasury? Pay the penances? Fatten the popes, cardinals, bishops, priests, monks, trulls, and other abortions? Who will build minsters and cathedrals, when men no longer worship God in temples but only in spirit and in truth? Who will still need and pay for the escort of princes and lords on the highroad, when men are everywhere as safe as in Abraham's bosom? What will become of the hedge-hiders and stirrup-knights,

[1] An allusion to the popular tradition that Emperor Frederick I, known as Barbarossa or Redbeard, is sleeping under enchantment in the mountain called Kyffhäuser, whence he will one day issue forth to unite the German nation and restore its ancient glory. This will only be when the ravens cease flying about the mountain. A monument to Barbarossa now surmounts the Kyffhäuser.

when their nags are no longer used to snatch the purses of poor merchants and peasants? When they shall no longer make assaults, ride, rob, rape, pillage and plunder? No and never, dear brothers! Your undertaking is against Christum, as the rogue[1] writeth: then, whoso crieth out against the godless, he is against Christum. The compassionate Samaritan—is against Christum. Whoso washes the sores of poor Lazarus—is against Christum. Know ye not what standeth in the Gospel: make war, slay one another, judge ye each the other. Rob and deceive each other. If one of you hath ten coats, then let him snatch the eleventh from the back of him that hath but one. Thus doth the Pope, thus do the parsons understand the Gospel. But God said: let there be light, and there was light; and so light hath it become that I see it shining, as God is my witness, through my blind eyes.

[*He sits down overcome.*

Voices

Hurrah for German evangelical freedom. Hurrah for the blind monk!—Bootlace, bootlace!

The Blind Monk

[*To* Kratzer.] Have ye heard? Brother Andrew marches to Würzburg with the guns.

Kratzer

So ran the rumour; but I would not believe it. Is it certain?

[1] A punning distortion of the name Luther into the form *Luder*, rascal.

THE BLIND MONK

Aye, brother. Before sunup to-day we offered praise and thanks to God together for the last time, down yonder in the valley, in the chapel of Kobolzell.

HANS THE SHEPHERD

[*With fierce gesture.*] Shall we ride with that rogue, with Karlstadt, into the peasant camp? Let the Devil do that.

THE BLIND MONK

What hast thou against Karlstadt, brother?

HANS THE SHEPHERD

On the word of a cavalier, I will take that damned heretic and defamer of Mary and split his head asunder with a halberd, ere I suffer him to mount a horse.

KRATZER

[*Aside to others.*] Nutmegs in warm beer are good for the hysterics. 'Twas to prevent the like of this that Florian Geyer had gallows put up.

FIRST CITIZEN

[*Table 1.*] Yester, when that they had scarcely finished the gallows, Claus Yckelsheimer of Gailzhofen climbed upon it and cried that he would hang his squire Kunz Ofner thereon.

PEDLAR

[*Calling.*] Who'll buy, who'll buy? Fresh ab-

solution from Rome, dispensations warm from the Holy Father. Whoso would eat milk and butter on fast day, hath two Rhenish gulden to pay. [*Casually.*] Cardinal Cajetan absolves himself, eats meat during Lent so much as he will; the German fish ruin his stomach. Money, money for St. Peter's! Some saint must be canonised, the Turks must always be fought. The pallium of the Archbishop of Mayence costs twenty thousand gulden but is not paid for yet. Here ye can buy Christum for two whitepence. Who'll buy? I'll take groschens of Prague or pence of Regensburg, German guldens of gold or Italian florins.—Lawrence Valla: the supposed donation of Constantine, from which the Pope made up the lie of his secular dominion. The great miracle at Berne! The burning of John Huss at Constance for the sake of the faith! Savonarola tortured, hanged, and burned for the sake of the faith! John Hilten, slowly dying in the dungeon at Eisenach for the sake of the faith!

KILIAN THE ARMOURER

[*Has entered and speaks to* KRATZER.] I am to mend Florian Geyer's armour?

KRATZER

Go then to the armoury, brother, where stand the two new guns that they would take to the camp at Würzburg. For Kessler, the master gunsmith, came hither to-day in the cool of the morning and took Geyer to see them. [KILIAN *takes a seat.*

MENZINGEN

[*Without armour, very busy, enters; to* KRATZER.] Hath Florian Geyer gone to the armoury?

KRATZER

Long since, brother.—How looks it upon the streets?

MENZINGEN

Other than heretofore, ere that Geyer and the peasant captains marched in. Just as if we were living in the deepest peace of God. [*As it has become quiet, and many notice and listen to him, he turns to the assembled company.*] I wish you a very blessed life, dear brothers.

MANY VOICES

Godspeed, Brother Menzingen. God bless thee, brother.

MENZINGEN

How are ye minded in your new peasant skin?

FIRST CITIZEN

Since Rothenburg hath turned black and gone over to the peasants, it seems to me, brother, as if I had got well of the French.

SECOND CITIZEN

Brother, we made a wager, I and Engelhart Goppolt: when Florian Geyer stood upon the flesh-stands outside the city hall two days ago—did he not speak and shout, saying that the city should swear allegiance to the brotherhood for an hundred years and one?

MENZINGEN

Hast heard aright, brother!

SECOND CITIZEN

And in the meantime, ere that the great and general Reformation should have been set up through most learned Christian men and knowers of the Holy Writ, we are not held to the payment of any rent, the giving of tithe, nor yet neither ground-rent, hand-fee, head-tax. Need not serve without pay nor against our will, nor pay taxes, but are free of all unrighteous burden and oppression.

MENZINGEN

Hast heard aright, brother!

THIRD CITIZEN

Hurrah for German evangelical freedom!

FOURTH CITIZEN

All things must be wholly in common. Equal burdens break no man's back.

THIRD CITIZEN

We would be as free as the Swiss and have a voice in religion like the Hussites.

SECOND CITIZEN

[*Table 1.*] Do you also ride with the guns?

MENZINGEN

No, brother, I will in no wise forsake the congregation here at Rothenburg, with you I'll die and live.

THIRD CITIZEN

[*Table 1.*] Long life to Squire von Menzingen!

PEDLAR

[*Calling.*] *Concilium, concilium!* [*To* MENZINGEN.] Look, brother! They stuff up their ears like the Pope at Rome, will hear nothing of it. —The new Karsthans, by the noble knight Ulrich von Hutten, who being persecuted by the papists hath even now ended his precious life upon an island in the lake near Zürich. Squire Helfreich, Cavalier Heinz, and Karsthans hold a fine conversation together, most entertaining and instructive to read.

KILIAN

[*Stepping up to Table 2.*] I am to mend Florian Geyer's armour.

GEORGE KUMPF

[*Cries through the window.*] God speed thee, Brother Menzingen!

MENZINGEN

God bless thee, George! Step in, take thy morning draught.

GEORGE KUMPF

I must to the armoury, brother, have no time . . . must help take our guns toward Würzburg.

MENZINGEN

Bravo, George, no man may save himself and

lag behind when the Gospel demands a helping hand.

KRATZER

Od's guts, George! Why, thou makest a rattle like an armoured knight.

GEORGE KUMPF

I have armour on.

MENZINGEN

Enter in, George, let thyself be inspected.

[GEORGE *disappears from the window.*

PEDLAR

Judas in Rome! Simon in Rome! [*To the* WAITRESS.] Come hither, Meg-o'-the-mill, let's have a smack, thou shalt have a fat benefice. Canst thou not read, nor Latin prate, Thy leman be the parson's pate.

[GEORGE *enters, is stopped at the door and lingers there.*

RENEGADE MONK

A likely lad.

FIRST CITIZEN

[*Table 1.*] Is it not? 'Tis young George Kumpf, Mayor Kumpf's brother.

RENEGADE MONK

Mayor Kumpf, he that during service in the parish church thrust the mass-book out of the priest's hands and drove the boys out of the choir-loft?

First Citizen

The same, brother.

[George Kumpf *steps forward briskly.*

Menzingen

Indeed and on my soul, brother, thou art made for armour.

Kratzer

A right good cuirass. Nuremberg make.

Kilian

The fever shake you! Not "Nuremberg make"; 'twas I that made it, and here at Rothenburg, too; with mine own hand did I make the harness.

Kratzer

Take this. A draught of wine is good for the road. Here's hoping you may rap stoutly at the gate of Our Lady's Mountain.

George Kumpf

And that we'll surely do.

[*Sings.*

The Singer [1] sings the tenor scale,
And alto trills the Nightingale;
Sharp Meg sings bass with clamour.
The Serpent whines the treble shrill,
They reck not whom they hammer.
They sang till walls were unavailing,
And bed and bolster through the roof came sailing.

[1] Fantastic names of field guns.

ALL

[*Sing with abandon.*

They sang till walls were unavailing,
And bed and bolster through the roof came sailing.

THE BLIND MONK

God bless and keep thee on thy warlike May-journey.

MAYOR

[*Enters.*] A good year to you, dear brothers. The guns are moving off, twelve horses before each piece. In the whole German nation are not such splendid guns to be found, not the like of yours.

VOICES

Hurrah, Rothenburg!

[*All disperse at breakneck speed; accounts are hastily paid, and the foreground is entirely emptied. Only* KRATZER, MENZINGEN, *the* MAYOR, *and the* BLIND MONK *remain, also the* WAITRESS, *who clears the tables.*

KRATZER

[*Handing a peasant his round hat.*] Here is thy bullet, forget it not.

[MENZINGEN, *who is carrying papers, seeks a little absently to open a chest that stands in some inconspicuous place.*

KRATZER

[*Filling a jug of wine, observes* MENZINGEN.] The key is here.

MENZINGEN

[*Taking the key, showing the papers.*] Once more there was a whole Bibleful of talk in the committee.

THE BLIND MONK

Again they struggled manfully for the dunce-cap. [*Enter* FEISTEL.

KRATZER

But to ride along into the peasant camp, nobody fought for that right. All everybody thought of was to pull his head out of the noose—what wilt, Feistel?

FEISTEL

One stands at the Röder Gate, brother. Requests admission.

MENZINGEN

Is he of the Margrave's men?

FEISTEL

So far as I could see, he had the peasant cross on his arm.

KRATZER

Is it a mounted messenger, Feistel?

FEISTEL

I would not ask a better mount in all my life, brothers. I have not seen so fair a horse since I was in leading-strings.

MENZINGEN

Mayhap it is William von Grumbach. Rideth a fair, milk-white, Arabian steed.

KRATZER

Bid him dismount and come hither on foot, Feistel. Else they will sound the alarm and gather in throngs. [*Exit* FEISTEL.

THE MAYOR

[*To* KRATZER.] Brother! Fill my jug with wine of the Tauber.[1]

KRATZER

Wouldst thou empty it, brother?

THE MAYOR

Supernaculum; call me a popish knave an I leave enough to make a louse drunk. . . .

MENZINGEN

Where saw you William von Grumbach last, Brother Bezold?

THE MAYOR

At Würzburg in the war council of the peasants. Was despatched with a message to the Margrave Casimir. Hath moreover promised Florian Geyer to win good companies of horsemen on half-pay, also to assemble a strong troop of arquebusiers against the League.

[1] The full name of the city is Rothenburg-ob-der-Tauber.

MENZINGEN

Brother! I am credibly informed that the Margrave stands in brave strength, hath marched into the field from Onolzbach with a great host, more than six hundred horse, about two thousand foot, fourteen great cannon.

THE MAYOR

Now that we have taken Rothenburg, the spear is pointed at the Margrave's belly. He must seek a compact, will he nill he. Neither is there need, as you desire, that Geyer should ride over to Ansbach.

MENZINGEN

Heed not the Margrave too little. An ye look not to it, it may come to pass that ye will neither now nor never bring the two Rothenburg culverins into the camp at Würzburg.

THE MAYOR

The Margrave is a fox. He must needs have turned into a gray ass ere he dare to touch those two pieces. Should he snare them away from us, that were putting his bare hand into the fire.

MENZINGEN

[*Vexed.*] May be, brother. But consider well what manner of ally the Margrave is. An he take oath with the brotherhood, then ye may confidently await George the Steward and the Swabian League and need have no further concern on that score.

THE MAYOR

[*With abrupt laughter.*] Do you know the tale, Sir Knight, wherein the sheep gained a wolf as ally against the wolf? Thereafter two wolves feasted on the sheep. On no account, brother, ask Geyer aught about this matter; 'tis not for this that we have worn ourselves to the bone.

MENZINGEN

Then I would that I lay in the deepest dungeon or had never won Rothenburg for you.

THE MAYOR

Was it you that won it for us? Now, by God's hat!

MENZINGEN

I have spared myself in no wise nor cast myself on the bed of sloth, but staked my life, goods, and honour until I brought the citizens to the point where ye could ride in and lay yourselves on the ready-made couch. And this is the thanks of the common peasant brotherhood.—I am under service obligation to the Margrave Casimir, and if ye should dare to proceed in unbrotherly fashion against his grace. . . .

THE MAYOR

Brother Menzingen, you please me not.

MENZINGEN

Nor you me, brother.

THE MAYOR

You do not spare yourself and you work stoutly.

But whether for good or ill of our evangelical freedom, that no man can say.

MENZINGEN

I am as wholly devoted to the Gospel and our common evangelical freedom as any man in the German nation, and whoso speaketh the contrary, him will I meet and encounter with the sword at whatsoever hour it please him.

THE MAYOR

Brother, my heart is joyful, and I will gladly fight out the quarrel with the wine-jug, in so far as you are disposed. For more than this I have no time. What care I what ye do? Settle that with God and your own conscience. [*He takes an enormous draught.*] This I have drunk in honour of all good evangelical brothers, and whoso hath as good a peasant heart as I, let him do the like. I must away to the armoury. Farewell, one and all. [*Exit.*

A VOICE

[*Outside.*] Strike dead, strike dead!

MENZINGEN

'Tis a devilish far-reaching war, Brother Rector!

RECTOR BESENMEYER

[*Who has sat quietly at a table near* MOLLY.] Shun the fire, thou'lt shun the smoke. Wilt thou twist thy mouth and look askance because that great divine pure fire maketh a little smoke?

MENZINGEN

No man knoweth what may come thereof. Hatred, quarrels, disputes, discord in all quarters.

RECTOR BESENMEYER

What may come thereof, brother? All is much better than it hath been. Shall we not dance a little, leap about, go begging, forget propriety? They are but scarcely freed from the stocks. No man could eat a bite or drink a drop, but there was a law passed about it. One must dress himself and trim his hair, behave so and not otherwise, not eat this food, not drink that drink, and all the rest of it. . . .

[*Noise and murmur approach.* KARLSTADT, *pale as death, enters in flight, followed by* HANS THE SHEPHERD *in a fury of rage, dragging behind him* GEORGE KUMPF *who tries to hold him.*

KARLSTADT

Help, help, dear brothers!

HANS THE SHEPHERD

Let the Devil help thee, since he is thy master. Hast thou not called the Blessed Virgin a light-o'-love? Destroyed her images, had their heads sawn off, overthrown houses of sacrament, taken the tender body of our Lord out of its housing and emptied it out in dishonourable fashion? Od's zooks! Whoso splits the head of yon defiler and Devil's parson, he needs no more absolution so long as he live.

George Kumpf

[*Steps between* Karlstadt *and* Hans.] Peace! Put up the sword, Hans.

Hans the Shepherd

Laddie, do thou step aside, in three devils' names, or I will give thee such a thrashing . . .

[*He makes for* Karlstadt *again.*

George Kumpf

God's belly! think'st thou I cannot curse so roundly as any lansquenet? Give peace! Put up thy sword, or . . .

Hans the Shepherd

[*Impeded, calmed for the moment.*] Brotherkin, step out of my road, or else, an I give thee thy quieter, thou'lt fall asleep, and when I put thee to bed then my dozen is complete.

Karlstadt

What evil have I done thee, dear brother? Wherein have I sinned against thee, that thou seekest my life?

Hans the Shepherd

Thou must bleed, as sure as I am an honest soldier.

Karlstadt

[*Stepping before him with outstretched arms.*] Well then, strike, and may God pardon thee!

A Peasant

[*In an undertone to* Hans.] Do it not, Hans.

Thy sword can do naught against Karlstadt.

KARLSTADT

Strike, dear brother, and God forgive thee.

HANS THE SHEPHERD

[*As if paralysed by a mysterious power, abruptly thrusting the sword back into the scabbard.*] I fear no black art. Aye, and I am steadfast, as well as another, but not through the Devil, but through God and because I always bear the Gospel of St. John upon my breast—— Pox, art thou mocking me?

KRATZER

What art thou to me?

HANS THE SHEPHERD

Whether thou hast cast the evil eye on me, that I would know.

KRATZER

May all the lightnings of heaven come and strike thee all of a heap! Wilt thou even seek a quarrel with me?

VOICES

Hey, go and call Florian Geyer hither.

HANS THE SHEPHERD

Aha! swish! bring along your wet bird, and call ten other peasant fop-heads and lousy pie-faces to boot. With a tent-peg would I keep twelve dozen of them at bay.

[Geyer *and* William von Grumbach *enter.*

Geyer

What is going on here?

Hans the Shepherd

I am an honest German wight, have always served his Emperor's majesty true and faithful; never been under the fingers of no provost; nor did no cursed court ever sit in judgment over me. Am no outlaw neither. Nor did I ever serve the French against the imperial majesty and the German nation.

Geyer

Knowest thou me?

Hans the Shepherd

Do I know you, Squire? I know you well, Squire. From the days at Pavia I know you. And from those days you know me well, too, and if you will, I'll sing you here a tune in the Pavian style. Know you the Pavian style, Squire? Do you stare at me, Squire? I'll not die of that. [*He turns his back on* Geyer *and goes insolently to the bar.*] I'll not die at all, for I have that in writing from Death himself: he'll let me live till I have prayed one paternoster. He can wait a while for that. [*He laughs drunkenly, and his laughter passes over into a husky, defiantly mocking sing-song.*]

We're of the knightly order,
But now on poverty's border,

And still we want to rise.
We want our babes and women,
From whom we've long been driven,
Our castles still we prize.
The mob shall help us battle,
Then like wolves among cattle
We'll charge the priestly line.
The parsons all we'll scatter,
Themselves to death we'll batter,
And drink their goodly wine.
For God this word hath given:
Thou must seek Christian living,
All men are brothers of thine.

GEYER

Lansquenet.

HANS THE SHEPHERD

Hi!

GEYER

Put up the sword.

HANS THE SHEPHERD

Pish!

GEYER

Where art thou?

HANS THE SHEPHERD

Od! at Rothenburg.

GEYER

Then shouldst thou know and keep the city's laws.

[*He strikes him full in the face with his fist, so that he collapses without a sound.* KARLSTADT *and others busy themselves with him.*

GEYER

[*Quite calmly to* KARLSTADT.] Are you still of a mind, Brother Andrew, to ride with the guns?

KARLSTADT

Aye, Brother Geyer, an God give me strength.

MENZINGEN

Here you have received but a foretaste. There are many uncouth, wild, and unbridled men in the camps.

KARLSTADT

God preserve us from the fear of men. It is not so long ago that my brother-in-law in Frankfort and I were the only two evangelical brothers in the realm. Now that God hath permitted the seed we have sown to spring up, should I now be of small courage, sit by the stove and stir porridge? By no means, brothers.

WILLIAM VON GRUMBACH

I come from Würzburg and can assure you on my word of honour: you run danger of life and limb there.

KARLSTADT

God reward you, dear warner, but I do not fear that my brothers at Würzburg will do me any hurt. This poor deluded Hans hath to this

day served only princes and lords. But these have always chased and persecuted me and sought for my life, and have portrayed me to their servants as a hellish black villain. The common folk, on the other hand, the dwellers in huts of clay, that sleep on straw and eat the bread of hunger, they know Brother Andrew well.

WILLIAM VON GRUMBACH

That were well enough and in no wise anything to be said to the contrary, had not Luther declared against you in his writings.

KARLSTADT

[*Fanatically.*] Luther is bound to the Devil's tail. Scarce two weeks ago did he come out in print and rage against princes and lords: "An the peasants slay you not, then others must do it." To-day he speweth out death and fire against the peasantry: they should be stabbed, beaten, throttled. The guns should be made to roar into them.

MENZINGEN

And yet Luther hath much weight with the people.

KARLSTADT

Then hath the Devil stricken them with blindness, if they trust in a man that to-day speaketh sweet and to-morrow sour. Luther understands not these times. Visionaries he calleth us; evil, devilish, factious spirits he calleth us. That means, it suits him to have the Gospel on his tongue, to teach it, dispute over it, but to live it

suits him not. And yet all preaching, crying, and word-making is empty vapour. Doff costly furs and renounce all pride, pomp, and wealth, donning a coarse homespun and joyously giving even that, if need be, to your neighbour: that I have done, but such is not Luther's way. I know Luther well. I promoted him to be a doctor. He hath called me his revered teacher and his friend. Now is he my fierce enemy; but I heed his published revilings as little as though I had stepped upon a pebble. Farewell, dear brothers. It shall be with me according to God's will.

[Karlstadt *has shaken hands with many and now withdraws, accompanied by the* Blind Monk *and others.*

Geyer

Luther hath taken a wife. Therefore he cannot come. . . . It costs an effort to open one's lips against Luther. We have a right to do so, roundly and severely. Woe, that he hath turned Judas! He would have the folk to be free Christians and bodily slaves.—I cannot ride to the Margrave now, Stephen.

Menzingen

Hast thou dreamt of dead fish, or did a hare run across thy path?

Geyer

I can endure it no more, I would fain ride three mounts to death and be back in Würzburg, the sooner the better. It repents me sore that I came away thence. [*He drinks.*] A good liquor, brother.

KRATZER

I believe you! Fritz Teuber, the servant of the council, brought it, four cans full, by way of an homage to you from the high council.

GEYER

[*Laughing.*] May the pest strike thee! The honourables of the city give me old wine. God grant that the new wine which I have brought in may suit them as well as this doth me.

MENZINGEN

[*Drawing forth from one of the innkeeper's cupboards a surplice and crucifix.*] Two fine, artfully made pieces.

GEYER

Have ye been plundering?

MENZINGEN

We saved them from Karlstadt and his blind rage. He saith, no painter should paint a picture any more, nor carve any more images, but everything should be portrayed within the heart.

GEYER

[*Regarding the crucifix.*] Thank God for art.

KRATZER

Carven by Veit Stoss, whom they branded through both cheeks at Nuremberg.

GEYER

What of it?

MENZINGEN

Thou shalt by no means regard us at Rothenburg as niggards.

GEYER

God's blessing, Stephen. Keep it for me, Brother Kratzer. I will demand it of thee when we twain feast upon the hare that still sits in the forest.

WILLIAM VON GRUMBACH

[*Drinking to* GEYER.] Thy health, brother-in-law.

RECTOR BESENMEYER

Have you word, brother, from the camps before Würzburg?

GEYER

Aye, and no great pleasure therein. They fly at each other in the council of war over a broken glass. No man knows who is chief. They break each other's heads. What they have promised me they do not keep. They engage no horsemen. They have let the lansquenets that were in the camps march away and join the other side. Yet I am still of good courage and have no fear. The black troops are my encircling walls.

WILLIAM VON GRUMBACH

Three days ago I rode into Würzburg, two days ago out again. Well I could see that Geyer was not in the camps. Everybody mad and blind drunk. Had to dismount and lead my horse by

the bridle through the streets, lest he step upon the open jaws of some drunken man, woman, or little child.

MENZINGEN

Good news from the Margrave?

WILLIAM VON GRUMBACH

He will send two counsellors into the peasant camp.

GEYER

[*Resolutely.*] Good.

MENZINGEN

Have they begun to shoot?

WILLIAM VON GRUMBACH

As hard as they may from the ramparts and down from the castle. Already horrible damage done in the town, and many of the peasants have lost their lives.

GEYER

To Würzburg!—To Würzburg!—[*Shouts in the street:* "Hurrah, Florian Geyer!"] What means this?

KRATZER

They wish to see you before you ride out.

RECTOR BESENMEYER

If it please you, Brother Geyer, say a good word in farewell, a vigorous word, just as you feel in your heart, and put to shame all *oratores* and preachers.

GEYER

[*Calling through the window.*] I thank you, dear peasant brothers. Farewell, dear evangelical brothers. I go from you in order that the divine purposes of this time may be brought to a blessed end. In the Kyffhäuser there is a stir of life. The hidden Emperor hath stirred and stretched. Barbarossa hath risen to his feet and will come forth with all his force. The daughter of the rich man he will give in marriage to the poor. Priests and monks he will do away with. Unrighteous right he will suppress, and righteous right he will exalt.—The realm must be reorganised. This must take its beginning in Franconia. The old imperial constitution is Franconian. So will the new one be. We have to elect, we the peoples and not the princes. What is the Spaniard Charles to us? A stranger who understandeth not our need. We want a German evangelical overlord: a people's emperor, not a Pope's emperor. He shall take the coronation oath, but of the six questions there are not to be merely two referring to the people, and four to the Papacy. And as the newly elected king has to reply: "I will," so I too say: I will, I will, I will . . . I will prepare the way for Barbarossa. [*A furore of enthusiasm in the street:* "Hurrah for Florian Geyer!" *All those in the room join in. They push forward to shake* GEYER's *hand, which he gives to all in turn. Laughter, emotion, and the gaiety of hopefulness. Cries of* "Bootlace!" GEYER *boisterously takes out of the cloth which he has retained one of the crabs and sets it on the table, crying.*] Old crabs teach young

ones how to run. They all go backwards, every one.

Rector Besenmeyer

Mother Mary! I had almost forgot, brother: here is a wench with messages for thee.

[Geyer *and* Besenmeyer *walk up to* Molly *and try to waken her.*

William von Grumbach

[*Talking in rough and brutal fashion across the table.*] Lately I gave a fellow pepper for crabbing, one that was a servant of the former priest of Würzburg. He was fishing and crabbing in my ponds and brooks as if they were the Bishop's. Had my men catch him and hang him up on a willow over the brook he liked so well; had a flowing white robe put on him, all painted with crabs and fish. The ravens came flying to him, three weeks and more. Never touched another crab. . . . I was safe from him, by the rood.

Kratzer

Rumour hath it that the Steward of Waldburg hath won a battle against the peasant forces, not far from Böblingen.

Menzingen

A flying speech, a lying speech, invented by lords and slaves of priests to create terror and disaffection among our people.

GEORGE KUMPF

[*Enters, with imposing military bearing.*] I report to you, Brother Geyer, that the guns are moving. . . .

MENZINGEN

Why do ye heed the wench?

GEYER

[*Forcibly raising* MOLLY.] Hi there, up!—Get up!

RECTOR BESENMEYER

Here is a letter.

GEYER

[*Breaks the seal.*] From Brother Löffelholz, my field-clerk, writ in Latin which I do not command. [*Hands the letter to* RECTOR BESENMEYER, *who retires with it.*] Hi, wilt thou awake now? What verbal message hast thou?

MENZINGEN

Knowest thou the wench?

GEYER

Should I not know her? Two years and more have I had her in my tent; 'twas all I could do to buy her from a Bohemian horseman.

WILLIAM VON GRUMBACH

Fifty gold florins for the wench! Art content, brother-in-law?

MENZINGEN

What, shall she wait upon thee at the bath?

GEYER

Save thy gold, William. She is good for naught save that she plays the lute a bit.

WILLIAM VON GRUMBACH

A hundred gold florins, then.

GEYER

Not for a thousand, not for ten thousand. And though thou tookest her fleetly to-day, to-morrow she would be in my tent again.—What doeth Tellermann?

MOLLY

They have put Tellermann in irons.

GEYER

—What doeth Tellermann, girl? Hark to my question.

MOLLY

[*Defiant.*] I heard it.

GEYER

Drink wine and strength.—Hast been long astray?

MOLLY

Nay, Captain.

GEYER

When didst thou leave Würzburg?

MOLLY

Yestreen after taps.

GEYER

Who sent thee off?

MOLLY

Brother Löffelholz.

GEYER

How is Brother Löffelholz?

MOLLY

Lieth sick in his tent, Captain.

GEYER

God grant him recovery.—What doeth Tellermann?

MOLLY

They have put Tellermann in irons.

MENZINGEN

Her speech wanders, she is not in her senses.

MOLLY

I am in my senses and my speech wanders not.

GEYER

[*Shouts at her.*] Whom have they put in irons?

MOLLY

Tellermann.

GEYER

Tellermann?—My lieutenant?

MOLLY

Aye, Captain.

GEYER

Who—hath put Tellermann in irons?

[BESENMEYER *returns.*

MENZINGEN

What ails the Rector?

KRATZER

What news have you?

RECTOR BESENMEYER

[*Pale, most agitated.*] Good news. Nothing, dear brothers.

WILLIAM VON GRUMBACH

I fear the Devil lurks in that letter.

THE MAYOR

[*Enters, brisk and merry.*] Haste, Captain, and forward with the guns in the name of God. The town pipers will escort us.

GEYER

By God's body!—Lock the door.—Speak, brother, what saith the letter?

RECTOR BESENMEYER

There are two letters, of which I have read the

half of one. From Wendel Hippler in Heilbronn and enclosed by Brother Löffelholz.

KRATZER

And what does Wendel Hippler in Heilbronn, brothers?

MENZINGEN

Oh!—Have I not told thee that he and other peasant counsellors are conferring on the great Reformation of the realm?

WILLIAM VON GRUMBACH

All the good heads have been sent out of Würzburg by the peasants. The blockheads they have retained.

THE MAYOR

What is going on here, what tidings have ye?

GEYER

Make haste, Brother Rector. What writes Hippler?

RECTOR BESENMEYER

The Steward of Waldburg hath won a battle.

WILLIAM VON GRUMBACH

Hath rumour not lied after all?

GEYER

Where?

RECTOR BESENMEYER

At Böblingen. Twenty thousand peasant brothers slain.

GEYER

Twenty thou . . . ——Out with my horse. To Würzburg, to Würzburg!

MENZINGEN

Twenty thousand peasants slain? . . .

RECTOR BESENMEYER

And one of them they caught: Nonnenmacher, who played the music at Weinsberg for Dittrich von Helfenstein on his road to death.

THE MAYOR

If he is executed, then the Devil take him.

RECTOR BESENMEYER

He is executed. But saving your presence: executed as a villain by devils. The Steward had him bound to a tree with an iron chain before the eyes of all, built a fire at some distance around him, and thus caused him slowly to sweat and roast to death. So he ran about like a dog, laughing, screaming, cursing, bellowing, while Lord George the Steward and other counts and lords of the gentry kept fetching more and more wood, themselves, with their own hands, until most grievously and piteously he quivered his last and died. . . .

GEYER

So will I wait upon thee and thy venal Leaguers, highwaymen, rogues, and street-sweepers, and by God's light, with the measures thou metest, with

the same shall it be measured to thee again. To Würzburg!—To Würzburg!

Rector Besenmeyer

Will you not hear what Löffelholz writes?

The Mayor

What writes Löffelholz?

Geyer

[*To* Molly, *with sudden recollection.*] What nonsense was that about Tellermann, that they had put him in irons?—

Rector Besenmeyer

[*Quickly.*] An attempt was made to storm the castles at Würzburg.

The Mayor

By God and a hundred thousand devils of hell, what is the meaning of this?

Geyer

[*Shouts.*] That is not true!

Rector Besenmeyer

Marry, upon my word, here it stands written.

The Mayor

They tried to storm—?

Rector Besenmeyer

First they ran against the ramparts. . . .

THE MAYOR

Treachery!—Knavery!—

GEYER

Knavery!—Accursed treachery!

THE MAYOR

Hadst thou but heeded me, Brother Geyer. Hadst thou but sooner let Kohl and Wertheim, Götz and Henneberg be imprisoned and pegged out, ere thou hadst let them send thee off hither.

GEYER

Did they not promise me upon honour and conscience that none should touch a target, none set up a storming-ladder, until a breach had been made? Did they not swear the stoutest oaths that they would not speak of an assault until I had brought the Rothenburg guns into camp?

THE MAYOR

Treachery!—Knavery!—

RECTOR BESENMEYER

The peasant troops compelled the assault.

THE MAYOR

Brother! What did I say?—What did we say that time in the chapter-hall of the New Minster? —Make thyself the master over them, bring them under thy control, rule them with iron rods, for their own salvation, for the good of us all.

Geyer

[*To* Molly.] Were our black troops in it too?

Molly

Aye, Captain. When the horns blew: "Those who would fight are just in time," our men hoisted the mutineer's flag; the greater part of our men rallied to it, and there was no stopping them. Tellermann went among them and said: he had promised thee, and with a handshake, that no assault should take place until thou wert again in the camp. Thereupon arose a shouting and a clamour: they too would join the dance. Many cried out that thou wert in secret the servant of the French, and added many improper and spiteful words more.—Tellermann called them rebels, violators of oath and duty, mutineers, slaves without honour . . .

Geyer

And then they put him in irons.—One thing more, Brother Rector: poorly run and quickly fallen, badly ventured, the assault repulsed?

Rector Besenmeyer

Aye, Brother Geyer.

Geyer

To be sure.

[*He begins to doff parts of his armour.*

The Mayor

For God's sake, it is high time we were at work.

GEYER

Too late.—How many are laid low of my black troops?

RECTOR BESENMEYER

Over the half.

GEYER

—Lads specially picked for their vigour—help me, Molly.

THE MAYOR

God's thunder, brother—what wilt thou?

GEYER

I will enter the Brotherhood of Communal Life, copy books and peddle German Bibles about.

THE MAYOR

Brother, thou art mocking us.

GEYER

[*Taking off his sword.*] Shall I not mock, when all the world mocks?

THE MAYOR

Brother,—hast thou taken leave of thy senses?

GEYER

Wrong! I have come to my senses.

RECTOR BESENMEYER

Will you not ride with us to Würzburg?

GEYER

To Würzburg? No! God knows I will not!

THE MAYOR

May God's torments afflict thee! Art thou a renegade? Wilt thou not ride to camp with us?

GEYER

In this state?

THE MAYOR

Well!—Arm thyself.

GEYER

And though I should gird two swords about me and put on three coats of mail, I have no further power in this affair and am worth just as much as a child of three years.

RECTOR BESENMEYER

Florian Geyer, hero of Weinsberg.

GEYER

—In God's name, leave me in peace.

[*Exit quickly.*

THE MAYOR

By St. George, Geyer must go with us.

FEISTEL

[*Enters, encounters the* MAYOR, *reports.*] Mounted messengers from Margrave Casimir.

MENZINGEN

[*To* GRUMBACH, *who has risen.*] Whither wilt?

WILLIAM VON GRUMBACH

With the messenger to Ansbach to join Margrave Casimir.

MENZINGEN

God grant that Geyer accompany thee thither. Now there is no salvation save through the Margrave.

THE MAYOR

Geyer must go with us. He must—must—go with us.

MENZINGEN

Try it, Brother Mayor.

THE CURTAIN FALLS

THE THIRD ACT

A central room in the town hall of Schweinfurt. To the right, entrance into the great hall. Löffelholz, *a wet cloth bound around his head, very pale and feeble, studying papers at a table.* Sartorius *facing him. Some messengers wait on benches. Among them the old Jew* Joey.

Sartorius

Would that some fruitful action might be taken by the Diet.

Löffelholz

If only the Margrave do not break away.—Jew!

Joey

Your worship.

Löffelholz

How long didst thou march along behind the Steward and the Leaguers?

Joey

A poor Jew must ride upon his mother's hide, he can't indulge in no rest. Marching along behind the Leaguers' fighting men about four weeks. God most righteous! What a cruel lord

is the Steward. Hangs the trees full of peasant bodies. More than six thousand men hath he caused to be executed up to this hour by the provost of the Swabian League. Oh my!—Oh my!

SARTORIUS

Who sent thee hither—Jew?

JOEY

The squire William von Grumbach.

SARTORIUS

Where sawest thou his worship last?

LÖFFELHOLZ

God hath mercy to bestow, but no more miserable sack of maggots than Brother Grumbach.

JOEY

With his grace the Lord Margrave of Ansbach, by your leave, in camp not far from Kitzingen.

SARTORIUS

Standeth the Margrave already before Kitzingen?

JOEY

Else I am no honest man. I will kneel down and you may pour water into my gullet until I die if the Margrave do not stand before Kitzingen.

SARTORIUS

Then God aid my squire to persuade the Margrave that he should consent to have Geyer con-

ducted to him, so that he may deal with him and make a decent compact.

LÖFFELHOLZ

I trust William von Grumbach as I would a fox.

JOEY

Squire von Grumbach is a *mashke.*[1]

SARTORIUS

What meaneth *"mashke"*?

JOEY

He is a *mashke,* his *chaful* [2] and his *chuf* [3] are not *tuw.*[4]

SARTORIUS

Is that Hebrew?

JOEY

It is, saving your learning. Hebrew, saving your learning. The tongue that God spoke to men—saving your learning.

LINK

[*Entering.*] Have ye heard: here in the town is the rumour spread abroad that the Leaguers have taken Weinsberg and burned it to the ground with all the goods that were in it?

LÖFFELHOLZ

Whence have you the word?

[1] Deceiver. [2] Pledge. [3] Debt. [4] Good.

JOEY

It is correct, gentlemen, 'tis all true. Weinsberg burned to the ground.

LINK

[*Rudely.*] Wert thou there, Jew?

JOEY

'Tis as certain that I was there and as certain that I saw Weinsberg burning as that you owe me a hundred florins, Master Parchmenter. Oh my!—Oh my!—I shall not forget, an I were to live more years than Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Women and children led out, for no defenders were in it, and they wailed and cried and tore their hair. But sooner had the stones had compassion on them than Lord George the Steward, here at Schweinfurt.

LINK

One more notch on the spear. The greater the crime, so much the bloodier will be the punishment. *Mort de ma vie!* I will tickle the Steward with my spear till the red sap run out.

LÖFFELHOLZ

O pshaw! Break wind till the walls shake. Softly, Brother Link. Your high-sounding words will not beat the foe.

LINK

[*Laughs loudly and embarrassed.*] *Mort de ma vie!* What witch hath thundered upon you, that even you make a wry face and look sour? [*Exit.*

JOEY

Always drunk. I have had to advance him a hundred florins and pay him fifty florins for protection, lest he and his brothers of the cup should run through my house in Würzburg.

[*Enter* FLAMMENBECKER.

LÖFFELHOLZ

Have you seen any trace of a messenger from the Margrave in the town?

FLAMMENBECKER

No, brother.

SARTORIUS

Have you not come upon the Squire von Grumbach?

FLAMMENBECKER

That braggart man-eater and peasant-flayer, that always goeth about hung with gold and silver? What is he to me?

[*He sits down on a bench yawning.*

BUBENLEBEN

[*Enters.*] Good morning, dear brothers. How is it, dear brothers?

SARTORIUS

I fear 'twill be a mournful Diet.—Letters, paper, paper messengers, subterfuges. The pepper-bags of Nuremberg have declined. Windsheim hath declined . . .

Rector Besenmeyer

[*Enters.*] *Bona dies.*

Löffelholz

Bene veneritis nobis.

Rector Besenmeyer

Art thou sick, brother?

Löffelholz

I think so. It goes badly with me, for a wretched nag kicked me in the breast.

Rector Besenmeyer

Go home, brother, and lay thee down.

Löffelholz

I? God forbid. Shall the hangman find me abed?

Rector Besenmeyer

Are our affairs in so evil a state, brother?

Löffelholz

'Twill be a pitiful Diet.

Rector Besenmeyer

Sursum corda.

Löffelholz

Sursum corda—kindle chimneys!

Rector Besenmeyer

[*Approaching him.*] Meseemeth, dear brother,

as if the session of the Diet had come a little too late.

Bubenleben

But how could we have held a session in these latest days?

Rector Besenmeyer

[*To* Löffelholz.] At the time when the armed bands of the brothers assembled about Würzburg. The lords of the nobility were old women and half dead. We had the counts of Hohenlohe in our power. Henneberg and Wertheim were in the brotherhood. The Margrave was in a tight place: his own subjects refusing him obedience. The Franconians were threatening him from Lauda and Aub. Our Rothenburg closed its gates to him. In the Upper Palatinate there was a threat of rebellion. The Bishop of Würzburg and likewise the men of Bamberg were so hard pressed that they would not easily have refused anything. Mayence, Strassburg, and the Margrave of Baden were in the same fix. The Elector of the Palatinate could not have done otherwise than call the Diet . . .

Bubenleben

At that time no man said a word about a Diet.

Löffelholz

[*Speaking with an effort.*] Geyer spoke of a Diet. 'Twas his *ceterum censeo.* God's torments afflict thee. None of you would listen. At that time the Steward had not won any Böblingen, and the Württemberg troops of the peasantry still faced

him undefeated. . . . Zounds, at that time they would certainly have come: princes, lords, and cities like so many obedient little pups; to-day they are hanging back.—Sit down by me, Brother Rector.

[Rector Besenmeyer *sits down beside* Löffelholz *and both begin to study a document.*

Sartorius

Have you seen no trace of my squire, Brother Bubenleben?

Rector Besenmeyer

What sort of writing is it?

Löffelholz

The draft of the constitution. You know of the committee, Brother Rector, that was chosen from among the common peasantry of the German nation, to take counsel concerning the new reformation and constitution of the realm; at Heilbronn they met, with Wendel Hippler at their head, until the Steward advanced; then they fled so fast that they left their saddles behind. 'Tis a good document; never had I a better in hand.—The hundreds and hundreds of mint-lords they wanted to do away, and in their stead set up a federal mint. The companies they also wanted to do away, the Fuggers, Welsers, and Hochstädters, that pillage rich and poor at their pleasure. The tariffs they wanted to abolish.

Joey

[*Has been looking over their shoulders.*] Oh

my!—Oh my!—I've been in the vaults owned in Frankfort by the Welsers and Fuggers of Augsburg. Called me stinking Jew and cursed me for a usurer, and yet they themselves practise usury like any Jew. But not on a small scale. Oh my!—Oh my!—Cheat hundreds and thousands of poor depositors of hard-earned money, fail and are then much richer than before. But a poor Jew has to bear the blame. I have never chopped cereal into sausage-meat. mixed goat-droppings with bay-berries, nor linden leaves with pepper, nor have I sold sawdust for cinnamon. But a poor Jew has to bear the blame. The Elector of Mayence, Albrecht von Brandenburg, wanted to form an alliance for the eternal banishment of us Jews, but is more interested in gold than the greatest Jew. I would buy him with hide and hair, if so be I had enough gold florins in my purse.

MENZINGEN

[*Has entered in armour; slaps* JOEY *on the shoulder.*] What is Joey mumbling? How many impoverished gentlemen hast thou lately roasted on thy spit?

JOEY

O me, sir! Mock me not, stern lord. Why is the gentry becoming poor, your honour? I have known the widow of a gentleman who sold me a village for a blue velvet dress that she had to wear to a jousting.

LÖFFELHOLZ

The Margrave stands before Kitzingen, saith the Jew.

MENZINGEN

A letter goes about from hand to hand, down in the tap-room, from George Kumpf who is now tarrying in the camp at Würzburg. Reports that he is credibly informed that the Margrave will send representatives to the Diet.

JOEY

Believe it not, your worship.

MENZINGEN

Is William von Grumbach not yet here?

SARTORIUS

The very question I had fain asked you, Brother Menzingen.

MENZINGEN

I have traversed all the inns, made inquiry everywhere, nowhere any trace of a William von Grumbach.

JOEY

Ho, ho! Squire von Grumbach will hardly come.

MENZINGEN

Why not, Jew?

JOEY

He bears tall feathers on his hat, therefore knows whence the wind blows.

SARTORIUS

Hath the squire not given thee any other message for us?

JOEY

I was to betake myself hither and await his brother-in-law, Florian Geyer, who had a business affair for me.

MENZINGEN

Money, Jew, much money!—Prepare thyself. Geyer is mustering troops in at two places.

JOEY

God the righteous! Whence shall I get all that money? A poor lansquenet comes with an old chasuble taken as booty—money! Old swords—copper ornaments—chains—spurs—useless rubbish—money! Have I the mines of Schwatz in pawn? Am I a gold-maker? Are there not enough French stivers and sun-crowns in circulation? Oh my!—Oh my!

LÖFFELHOLZ

Will Geyer come hither to Schweinfurt?

MENZINGEN

He's in the inn this long time, knew ye not?

LÖFFELHOLZ

Holy Mary! no—truly not.

JACOB KOHL

[*Enters, pale and dejected.*] Good morrow, gentlemen.

MENZINGEN

Many thanks, Brother Kohl. Is no messenger from the Margrave in town?

KOHL

I know not, to-day my head is heavy. Had to sleep in the stable with the horses. People came in after midnight, an old woman and a man. They whined and wept together till broad daylight. Not an eye could I shut.

LÖFFELHOLZ

[*Shivering.*] Ah, my friend, who but the Devil sleeps peacefully now? Since ye ran to assault Our Lady's Mountain against decision and agreement, I have not lain in a bed.

KOHL

Give thanks to Bubenleben for that.

BUBENLEBEN

What pratest thou against me?

KOHL

I speak the truth, naught else. Zounds, nothing else. . . .

MARTIN

[*Enters with papers, aloud.*] Florian Geyer is in the city. [*Sensation.*

BUBENLEBEN

What need of him have we here? When we needed him, he did not come.

LÖFFELHOLZ

May the thunder strike thee, parson, hast not come to thy senses even to this hour? Will thy

arrogance have no end? I doubt not. First ye reviled Geyer as if he were indifferent at heart to our evangelical freedom: then ye carried on accursed intrigues together, you and the gentry, Götz and Henneberg, though formerly ye would have naught to do with them. So ye made Geyer into a messenger and sent him off to Rothenburg, to the pleasure and satisfaction of the knights and lords, the highwaymen and hedge-hiders in the camp. From that time on they could try to make terms with the garrison, and each one look to his own interest. There was no one left to give them pepper. And then ye gave a general assault, although ye had promised Geyer in the council of war that no evangelical brother should set up a ladder until he were back in the camp and a breach had been made with the Rothenburg cannon—and ye had Tellermann put in prison and in irons . . .

Bubenleben

The black troops did that and not we.

Löffelholz

Who egged them on and undermined discipline? Who turned honest, God-fearing, manly servants into mutineers? The Devil may whitewash you, Brother Bubenleben. They call the Rhine the parsons' lane. But when parsons enter a ship, then the boatmen curse and cross themselves, for the saying goes that priests bring the ship misfortune and destruction. To our ship ye have brought misfortune, terror, and calamity. Geyer and his black troops—God had welded them together like fist and sword-hilt. Ye have torn

them asunder. The fist alone is of use to none. The sword alone is of use to none. So ye led a thousand peasant brothers against the castle, that means into death and destruction and slaughter. Afterwards, to be sure, when the greater part was down and said nothing at all, the rest was wounded to death, burned with pitch and sulphur, bleeding and blinded with powder, and crawling with groans and cries about the moats of Our Lady's Mountain until they died in misery, then ye called for Florian Geyer. Then all at once he was no longer a Frenchman. Then ye sent messenger upon messenger. But the man that did not come was Geyer. And wherefore should he have come? Stuff bread so long as ye will into a dead man's mouth, 'twill not bring him to life again.

Kohl

I wash my hands in innocence.

Bubenleben

Listen to that: now Kohl wants to slip out of the noose, as if he hadn't gone strutting along like a man that had swallowed a pike-staff. Didst thou not preach and prate to the mob about what a monstrous great fortune lay in the castle? Didst thou not promise them that they would have to cart away the gold and silver vessels on pack-horses, and measure the velvet stuffs with their long spears? Didst thou not boast thou wouldst not rest until thou hadst slept in the Bishop's silken bedding and drunk out of his golden beakers the oldest and best wine he hath in his cellar? His canons should pour it out for thee, and when thou

wert full, the chief captain of Our Lady's Mountain should have to hold a silver dish for thee, wherein thou wouldst puke.

KOHL

Now have a care, thou lying, rascally, thievish, perjured priest.

MENZINGEN

Come, calm down, brothers. Will ye once more fly at each other like alley-cats? Had that happened ere now . . .

LÖFFELHOLZ

We should have an emperor, an imperial court, a federal army, federal taxes, and permanent peace in the land.

MENZINGEN

Had ye but sent Götz to Rothenburg and kept Geyer with you!

BUBENLEBEN

If our cause had depended upon two eyes, then were it ill with the Gospel. Upon God did it depend, and if God will, then he can shatter our foes with one thought of his heart, and were they more in number than the grains of dust on the highway. Hath God placed Geyer in our camp? I have not bid him forsake his post.

KOHL

What prateth the priest? How many boards will withstand his lies? Didst thou not help drive Geyer away? Didst thou not cry out every day

that we should try the assault? Didst thou not shout: "On, on! while the fire is hot," and constantly quote Luther as saying that whoso helps to destroy the bishopric and to put down the bishops, unlearned bogeys and idols, is a true child of God and a good Christian? Aye, and well I know thine ancient hatred, priestling, and that thou hast wanted to fly at the throttle of the church steward ever since he excommunicated thee—didst thou not din into my ears that Geyer was godless, a heathen and a Turk? Didst thou not have visions and dreams to show that Geyer must leave or God would not be with us?

LINK

[*To* BUBENLEBEN, *scoffing.*] How stands it with your blessing, brother, wherewith you were to strengthen the troops? Did you not promise to catch the bullets in your sleeve, so that no man who ran against the castle should receive a scratch? But when the mortars and guns in the castle began to fire, and the thunder and rumble commenced, and the balls would by no means fly into your sleeve like obedient little mice, but blood and brains were spattering about you—ah! priestling, what didst thou then?

KOHL

He put his backside in jeopardy.

FLAMMENBECKER

In a cellar did he lie, half dead with fear.

BUBENLEBEN

I? Fellow!—What have I to do with thee?

Murderous rogue and plague of the land that thou art. Didst thou not boast in all the ale-rooms: it was thou that held the spear upon which they hurled Dittrich von Weiler down from the steeple of Weinsberg? Didst thou not carry his head about on thy spear, and smear thy shoes with the fat and blood that oozed out of his corpse?

FLAMMENBECKER

Didst thou not incite to murder and arson? Didst thou not cry aloud: "The day of battle dawns"?

VARIOUS VOICES

Geyer, Geyer—

[FLORIAN GEYER *enters in armour. He is pale and very solemn.* LÖFFELHOLZ, BESENMEYER, *and* SARTORIUS *go to meet him. He extends his hand to them and others.*

GEYER

God bless you—brothers. [*To* LÖFFELHOLZ.] God save thee, dear sharer of destiny. [LÖFFELHOLZ *and he embrace each other.* LÖFFELHOLZ *is too moved to speak. All the others are silent and taken aback.* LÖFFELHOLZ *forces* GEYER *down upon a chair beside him.*] Is the Margrave's escort in the town? He promised it to me lately through my sister-in-law.

SARTORIUS

Up to this moment neither escort nor any other message. The Margrave stands before Kitzingen.

GEYER

A still more evil rumour goeth about in the town: that the Margrave hath already recaptured Kitzingen.

LÖFFELHOLZ

Holy Mother Mary, God forbid.

GEYER

How stands it at Würzburg?

LÖFFELHOLZ

'Tis said the Steward and many princes and lords are marching straight to Würzburg. Berlichingen is on the way to Krautheim, and about thirty thousand going to join him. They set forth at midnight.

GEYER

Aye, I doubt not that at night Götz can look like a man.—The Margrave, as I am informed, is robbing and plundering, much worse than our forces ever did, taking money and treasure out of the monasteries of his liege lord, as much as he can grasp, and is paying his hirelings with it.

JOEY

Worthy Squire! By your leave, your worship. If the lords keep the upper hand, then 'twill have been the best of wars. I stood by in the camp of George the Steward, that they are now calling Peasant George. They were talking together and saying that they would play ball with peasant skulls as boys do with pellets of dung. They are in high spirits and playing for high stakes. Much

money they have, a mighty great lot of booty and plunder. 'Tis a good stroke of business for the gentlemen, or I will no longer count Hungarian guldens over twice. Heretofore the peasants have said much about the Gospel, now the princes and lords are doing the same. There is no better cloak under which they can sit in judgment. If they have taken the peasant's overcoat heretofore, now they take his oats. Formerly the poor man had to do unpaid work with his cart and mattock, hoe and horses, now his children must draw the harrow.

GEYER

Betake thee hereafter to my quarters, brother. I have a commission for thee.

JOEY

Oh my!—Oh my!—Squire von Geyer, I am no more than a poor Jew, your worship. 'Tis a wearisome business: lend, lend, and take poor security, suffer need, privation and toil, let yourself be trodden and spat upon and called a crooked cur. Squire von Grumbach hath told me that some business might be done with your worship. I thought to myself: I will not undertake it. 'Tis a dangerous matter and might cost you the best of necks. Then I went on thrashing it out with myself and I thought: Florian Geyer hath made a great union, so that for all in the holy realm there should be equal coinage, equal weights, and equal right. Equal right for us all, also for us Jews. From that hour I was on my way, betaking myself to Schweinfurt. I am ready, your worship, to undertake your business.

SARTORIUS

[*Alarmed.*] The Margrave hath taken Kitzingen.

[*The* MAYOR OF OCHSENFURT *is visible in the doorway, talking to a weeping old woman who leads by the hand a man with bandaged eyes, her son.*

KOHL

[*Embarrassed, going to* GEYER.] Good day, brother.

SARTORIUS

Brother Geyer, what shall I do now? It is not easy to know what course to take in these dangerous times.

LÖFFELHOLZ

Hast thou eaten coals, chalk, or wax, that thou art so void of colour?

SARTORIUS

They say the Squire von Grumbach is a deserter, is burning and burning in the Rothenburg district, aided by horsemen and footmen of the Margrave.

GEYER

Then we have one scoundrel the less, the Leaguers one more. The Devil take the dressed-up popinjay.

SARTORIUS

I am the servant of Squire von Grumbach, gentlemen.

MENZINGEN

Little enough will that help thee, clerk. If the

Steward of Waldburg is content to hang thy squire upon a green tree, he will take a withered one for thee.

Sartorius

Oh!—Are ye in a mood for jests, dear sirs? I am in no sort of mood for empty mockery. I was brought into your war against wish and will, solely at command of my gracious master. Think ye I am fain to drown in it?

Löffelholz

Take care—he will drop out of his trousers for very fear.

Sartorius

Is it your pleasure to make sport of me? I thought better of you. I had not hitherto taken you for such a dreamer and fanatic as to understand the Gospel in this sense, that everything must be turned upside down in the Holy Roman Empire. I have served the gentry in this affair, the common rabble and mob I will not serve. And if the gentry doth not protect me now . . .

Kohl

I wish thee a very good day, Brother Geyer.

Geyer

[*Acts as if he had only just noticed him.*] Od's body!—It's Kohl.—Busily wetting thy throttle last night? Bravely ringing the swine-bell?

Kohl

Dost thou refuse me thy hand, Brother Geyer?

GEYER

[*Without holding out his hand.*] Why should ye peasants not join in the sport, drinking Kotzberger and Rheinfalls and briskly filling your cups? At Rottweil there is a crowd of runaway lords, barons, and abbots, and while our Lord God hath been pouring out war with fire and sword over the German nation, they have held merry banquets and played at "pranking."

LÖFFELHOLZ

"Pranking"? Well, by God!

GEYER

A new sport *à la mode*. They throw the furniture back and forth, cast scraps of cake at each other, and pour unclean water on one another.

JOEY

The Leaguers also play that merry game, your worship. I saw it in the camp of the Steward, when the knights and captains sat at table . . .

GEYER

'Tis a merry sport and splendid pastime for a man of the nobility, and rewards the shedding of blood, whereby they can continue to do so to all eternity undisturbed.

[*The* MAYOR, *the* OLD WOMAN, *and the* MAN IN RAGS *have come forward.*

MAYOR

She was standing in the street, making a great outcry. So I had them taken and brought hither.

The Old Woman

[*Wailing stupidly to herself.*] The dear God preserve you. The seven seals declare it, The fish will all be roaring, The angels make a pother And cast stones at each other. The highways will be glowing, The waters outward flowing.

Löffelholz

[*Advances shivering.*] Why is the woman here, Brother Mayor?

The Mayor

Brother, had I let her go on as she was, she would have acted so that no peasant would be sure of his life any longer, here at Schweinfurt. Everybody stood around listening to her. Claims to come from Kitzingen. Swears every sort of oath that the Margrave hath taken Kitzingen.

The Old Woman

[*With chattering teeth.*] O holy blest St. Margaret, I pray, let me be not beset By beatings, falls, or other blows On any roads my body goes.

Menzingen

What liest thou of Kitzingen, woman?

The Old Woman

O thou thief unhung, be off. Thou godless rogue and malefactor, thou wert there thyself. Thou wert thyself a black peasant. Hast persuaded my son with thy hellish, malicious, devilish lies, turned his head with thy accursed, false, scoundrelly evangelical freedom.

The Man in Rags

[*Her son.*] Holy Mary!

The Old Woman

Pray for us.

The Man in Rags

Holy Mother of God, Holy Virgin among virgins!

The Old Woman

Pray for us.

The Man in Rags

Thou Star of Morning! O thou Lamb of God, that takest away the sins of the world!

The Old Woman

Spare us, O Lord.

The Man in Rags

Holy Virgin Mary—

The Old Woman

Pray for us.

Geyer

Is that thy son, woman?

The Old Woman

Aye, dear my lord, at your service, dear my lord. A stout and lusty lad, and right skilled with the crossbow. He'll hit the sparrow in flight for you, dear lord. But always did he grieve there-

after, so pious was the boy, so good was the boy, and such a soft heart had the boy.

THE MAN IN RAGS

Holy Mary—

THE OLD WOMAN

Pray for us—*hodie tibi, cras sibi.*[1] St. Paulus, St. Bartholomeus, The two sons of Zebedaeus, Holy St. Wenzel and the blessed Stenzel, They are good when cold winds blow And guard against both thunder and snow.

GEYER

Hi!—Granny. What ails thy son? Art thou sick, lad, hey?

THE OLD WOMAN

Not much, your worship. But a little, aye, your worship. An God will, 'twill pass over, your worship. Look you, honoured sir, a prince's word is a prince's word. And the Margrave made proclamation before Kitzingen: an they would open the gates to him, he would punish no man with death that had been with the peasants. And marched in with all his troops. I opened my window and looked out and cried to Veronica and was glad and said what fine looking men. What handsome, erect, sturdy servants hath the Margrave. They passed by and all grew still in the street. And I thought to myself: Margrave Casimir hath always been a good and gracious prince to us. This peasant cause is no sort of a cause. Luther is a heretic, Florian Geyer is a malefactor.

[1] "To-day for thee, to-morrow for himself." A perversion of the usual: *hodie mihi, cras tibi.*

The Man in Rags

Holy Virgin Mary—

The Old Woman

Pray for us.

Geyer

Speak on, granny. Have no fear.

The Old Woman

So then I got my supper ready, put milk on the table, bread and sauce, waited for my son, thinking he'd bring me lots of news, for he had run to the market-place. Steps came thumping up the stairs. I didn't know what had struck me. The Margrave took more than fifty citizens of Kitzingen and had their eyes burned out of their heads with red-hot irons. . . . So I took my son, worthy Squire, that I did, your worship, and came away from Kitzingen in the night. When we came upon a blinded man, I would say: now thou knowest not whither to turn. Now thou'rt kicking against the pricks. When thou still hadst eyes, the Devil rode thee so that thou becamest rebellious against God and authority. Now must thou suffer the penalty, but my child is God-fearing and goes freely, safely, and undamaged on his way.

The Man in Rags

Holy Virgin Mary—

The Old Woman

Pray for us.

MENZINGEN

[*Looking under the bandage.*] God help the poor soul, he is blinded.

GEYER

[*Draws a ring from his finger and hands it to her.*] Here, woman, take it freely, else must it have gone to learn Hebrew.

[*Rattling off their litany, mother and son, receiving gifts from many, betake themselves off at right. A pause of deep emotion ensues, all whisper together, depressed.*

LÖFFELHOLZ

When shall we begin the session, brothers?

MENZINGEN

After taps.

THE MAYOR

It is hard to admit, but 'tis none the less true: we are done for.

MENZINGEN

What did I bid you consider that day in the inn at Rothenburg? Heed not the Margrave too lightly; an ye desire not his friendship, then fear him all the more as foe.

LÖFFELHOLZ

There was a day, Brother Jacob Kohl, when thou layest with thy Franconians at Lauda and Aub; then hadst thou easily induced the Margrave to put on the laced boot. 'Twas then I sent word

to thee, with notable cost and peril, but thou wouldst not fight. Thou didst march upon Würzburg, while yonder gates stood open to thee.

GEYER

Peser le feu, mesurer le vent, faire revenir le jour passé, c'est chose impossible.[1] [*Anxious and perplexed whispering all about. Fear and unrest.*] What is now to be done, gentlemen? Shall we fall to "pranking"?

BUBENLEBEN

[*Dejectedly.*] I have already said: Now is not the time to hold Diets.

GEYER

Oh!—What?—Will nobody come, seeing that ye have approached so many cities, so many lords of the clergy and laity, so very humbly, submissively, and importunately? Will they no longer take your bait? Do they no longer care aught for your peace, so that they will give up the fight and make a treaty?

LINK

We must go to fight the Margrave and not hold Diets.

GEYER

How stands it, Jacob Kohl? What hath come of my dark lads? My black companies that I had mustered in at Brettheim and Ohrenbach, ere the great sport began? That I had schooled in the handiwork of war, made so skilled for fighting and

[1] "To weigh fire, measure the wind, recall a past day, are impossible."

attack as to put the Swiss to shame? Are they bold, willing, and cheerful as of old? Can one lead them against a swaggering man-eater and bloodthirsty Margrave, against a Steward and Satan?

KOHL

Wilt thou not hear me, brother? Brother Geyer! Even Adam in Paradise was heard. Brother Geyer! It is not my fault alone. I had to permit that they should be summoned to the assault, impelled and compelled by the entire peasant host at peril of life and limb. And yet it rues me sore.

GEYER

[*Springs up.*] Thunder and lightning, what boots it now? Rue or not, compelled or not. Do ye know what ye have done? The best of quarrels, the noblest cause, the holiest cause—a cause that God had put once into your hands and perhaps never again—in your hands it lay like a jewel in a pigsty. Ye did but play at "pranking" with it. The holiest of holies did ye drag about at your banquets, ye belched and puked upon it with your boon companions, lugged it through your vagrant beds, where ye and your whores and lovers trampled and sh—— upon it. Each one of you was thinking, like the fool in the comedy: "By rights I should be king." Clowns were ye and slaves of the mob. With swords did ye gird yourselves, with bits of harness hang yourselves, like boys behind their father's back. Not one of you, high as ye hold your heads up, hath the spirit to take a ripe pear from an old woman. Whoso sat most bravely behind the wine-jug, and growled stoutly in his cups,

whoso knocked Pope, Emperor, and Roman King into a cocked hat with his mouth, in brief, whoso was a regular Job, he was the right man for you.

LINK

Come, dear brothers—must we let ourselves be chidden here just as if we were schoolboys?

GEYER

Askest if thou must let thyself be chidden, miserable, rabbit-hearted vagrant, pin-head, bed-warmer, fat-beggar, pimp, and knave that thou art? Thou'lt have to let thyself be hanged by the neck, strung up between heaven and earth, and though the Devil had cut thee down from the gallows ten times already.

FLAMMENBECKER

Squire von Geyer lives in another world, thinks we are poor tongueless folk.

GEYER

Sweepings, that is what ye are. Dung from the highway, miserable rubbish that God might better have left lying behind the stove, not worth the rope the hangman uses to string you up. Poltroons that conquer the enemy with their heels and that wet their hose for deathly fear so soon as the lansquenets do but stir up the dust a bit.

FLAMMENBECKER

Shall we leave that unavenged, brothers?

GEYER

[*Whipping out his sword.*] Aha, come on, and a thousand welcomes; draw your blades, an ye have not turned into old women. Out with your swords, whoso hath one. I yet have a sword and a hilt thereon, and into that shall ye drive your teeth. But ye dare not. Ye quiver and quake for fear and pitiful terror. What hath come of the Gospel now? Not one of you but hath cursed and betrayed it in his heart.

[*Outside on the street there are cries and shots. Various voices, among them that of* SARTORIUS: "Alarm! Alarm!! The enemy." *A panic ensues. All flee, except* GEYER, MENZINGEN, *the* MAYOR, LÖFFELHOLZ, *and* JACOB KOHL.

GEYER

Od's body o' fear. [*He bursts into never-ending, grim laughter.*] Do ye make such masterly showing? [*He laughs on.*] "Just as the hare by the drummer sate"—'tis well. Now there's no more time for laughter and tacking with the wind. [FINKENMEISLIN, *covered with dust, enters.*] What news, Finkenmeislin?

FINKENMEISLIN

Messages from Pater Ambrosius in Würzburg. Ye must up and away, an ye still have any hope. The brothers at Würzburg are a flock without a shepherd. [*Hands him a letter.*

GEYER

Though there is little more to hope for, yet will

I betake me to Würzburg. But not alone: what I have brought together at Rothenburg, that will I take with me.

KOHL

Brother Geyer?

GEYER

What wilt?

KOHL

Become an honest man. Ride, fight, and die with thee.

GEYER

Up and tarry not, on to Würzburg and await me.

[*Exit* KOHL.

THE MAYOR

God help us out of the town.

MENZINGEN

'Twas a vain and empty clamour, a mere brawl.

GEYER

Where is Sartorius?

LÖFFELHOLZ

His ring on the hitching-post is empty.

GEYER

Then may the Devil lay a razor under the pillow as oft as he lay him down. Art thou sick, brother?

LÖFFELHOLZ

Aye, a little. [*A feverish chill shakes him.*]

I cannot go with you, but death will find me, though I go not to seek it.

MENZINGEN

Brothers!—And yet perhaps there are men from the Margrave at Rothenburg.

LÖFFELHOLZ

We have sent our advocates to the Margrave in vain. Force is the best advocate. Farewell.

MENZINGEN

Farewell, dear brother.

GEYER

Shall we leave thee here? Come with us, the men may prepare a wagon.

LÖFFELHOLZ

Leave me here—and leave me without concern. —I would die on your men's hands.

GEYER

Hast been true to the work. Adieu, adieu, we shall meet again.

[*Exeunt all except* LÖFFELHOLZ.

LÖFFELHOLZ

[*Has closed his eyes, opens them again. Fear and terror seize him, he tries to rise, to flee from something, crying.*] Help, help. dear brothers! Forsake me not, dear brothers! Take me with you. [*He falls back senseless.*

THE CURTAIN FALLS

THE FOURTH ACT

KRATZER'S *inn on the market-place at Rothenburg. It is past midnight. At the open window stand* MARKART TÖPPELIN, *called* BOHNLEIN, ENGELHART GOPPOLT, *linen-weaver,* HANS KUNRAT, HANS BEIHEIM, *mason, and* CHRISTHEINZ, *observing the reflection of a conflagration from which the entire sky is red. Around a table sit* JOE FRANKENHEIM, *a German schoolmaster,* OSWALD BARCHART, OXENHANS, *and* KILIAN *the armourer, as also two citizens.* KRATZER, *sitting on a cask near the bar, has a Bible on his knees and is looking thoughtfully past it. Beside him a candle is burning. At the stove sit a poor old married couple, eagerly eating bread.* CLAUS, *the man, has a wooden leg; his little fiddle lies beside him. The woman holds an old harp between her knees.* MOLLY *lies asleep under the bench.*

CHRISTHEINZ

'Tis toward Brettheim.

A CITIZEN

Aye. they say that Florian Geyer is again mustering troops at Brettheim. Mayhap he is beginning with plunder and pillage. Foe's land and friend's land is all the same to the peasant troops.

KILIAN

Geyer doth not so.

KRATZER

What are ye discussing there? Geyer hath ridden to the Schweinfurt Diet.

JOE FRANKENHEIM

A mighty lot will come out of that Schweinfurt Diet.

GOPPOLT

[*At the window.*] See the blood-red flame. 'Tis grown greater instead of less.

TÖPPELIN

Look at the red glare, all flames and smoke.

JOE FRANKENHEIM

[*Bringing out some document.*] 'Tis bright enow to read by, gentlemen.

OXENHANS

Have you gathered together many signatures?

JOE FRANKENHEIM

Two hundred and more.

OXENHANS

Od's precious passion!

JOE FRANKENHEIM

How many have you?

OXENHANS

A goodly number, albeit not so many as you.

JOE FRANKENHEIM

From house to house I went. Everywhere doors opened willingly, ere that I could beat the knocker twice against the portal. All interested in having the holy mass celebrated again at Rothenburg.

BARCHART

This heresy is coming to an end.

JOE FRANKENHEIM

Shall I set down thy name here too, armourer Kilian?

KILIAN

What sort of a writing is it?

JOE FRANKENHEIM

A petition to the council for the restoration of the mass.

CHRISTHEINZ

Seeing that Brother Andrew is not now in the city, the Devil is once more showing his hoof among us; but Karlstadt will return and settle the business of all hellish spirits of falsehood.

JOE FRANKENHEIM

'Tis doubtful if he will return hither. An evil reception had he at Würzburg. Mayhap he is flat on his back by now.—Why, you were always and ever a friend of Karlstadt, Master Kratzer.

KRATZER

A host is ever a friend of his guests. Such a friend of Karlstadt was I.

A CITIZEN

Many a man can cleanse his wine. But to cleanse himself from guilt that he hath taken upon himself before all men, 'tis a harder thing.

JOE FRANKENHEIM

Are you mumbling in your nose, master? Will your troubles not rise? Od's body o' fear, master, what odds when an innkeeper goes to hell. Used to pitch-flavoured beer and sulphurous wine, as he is, he won't mind pitch, sulphur, and fire hereafter.

CHRISTHEINZ

[*Sitting down at another table.*] Come, dear brothers. [*He lifts his beaker.*] Here's hoping the Devil will take the Swabian League together with its Steward George.

[*Laughter at* FRANKENHEIM'S *table.*

BEHEIM

[*Curtly.*] The Swabian League is hanging all tangled up on a nail on the wall.

[*Laughter at* FRANKENHEIM'S *table.*

CHRISTHEINZ

Now the blue fire strike thee, Kilian! Dost thou now side with others?

KILIAN

Brothers, I am an armourer. An the peasant

side win, what is to become of my trade? And as for the Papacy, I have always said: 'tis good to dwell under the crozier.

KUNRAT

Let the eaters of idolatrous flesh prate as they will. They will never again raise up the Devil's churches at Rothenburg.

JOE FRANKENHEIM

Many a man that still hath a tongue wherewith he raves against God and Christ and holy Church had best be mindful of George the Steward; for he hath caused the tongue to be cut out of the throat of many a false prophet. Haply is he nearer than they think.

CHRISTHEINZ

Were it not for Götz, who lieth in the field against the Steward with thirty thousand peasant brethren, I might perhaps show the white feather.

[*He laughs.*

GOPPOLT

Play a tune, Claus, and sing something.

CHRISTHEINZ

Götz will teach him what cowardice is.

[*He clenches his fist so as to thrust his thumb between the first and second finger.*[1]

[1] This gesture is called "showing the fig," and involves a pun on the word *Feige*, which means both "fig" and "coward."

Barchart

Master Kratzer, how about it? Shall a man be allowed to have more than two wives or no? How many doth Karlstadt allow you?

Kratzer

Gentlemen, why go ye not to Gabriel Langenberger to drink your wine? He is the man for you.

Joe Frankenheim

[*Alluding to* Molly.] A spindle in pocket, a wench in the house, and straw in your slippers, they cannot be hid.

Christheinz and the Others

[*Drum on the table and cry.*] Sing, Claus, sing.

Christheinz

Sing us the new song of Götz of Berlichingen and Florian Geyer.

Claus

[*Sings.*

Götz von Berlichingen and all his men
Lay in the town, as I've heard tell,
And all were peasant laddies.
Florian Geyer at Heidingsfeld lay,
Over eighteen thousand did he hold sway,
They were all Franconian laddies.

JOE FRANKENHEIM AND COMPANIONS

[*Sing at the same time.*

In vain was Münzer's deluded crying,
He's gone, and off his soul went flying;
They both were unsurpassed in lying,
Thomas, whom devils obeyed the faster,
And Luther, of all lies the master.

KRATZER

[*Hushing them.*] Gentlemen, 'tis past midnight. Keep the peace, Christheinz, and you, Goppolt. Claus, be still, this is no time for singing.

BARCHART

You're very particular all on a sudden, master. There have been times when the gentlemen of the commission drank here the whole night through.

KRATZER

Sit right on, gentlemen, an ye like not the taste of Gabriel Langenberger's wine. Only do naught that is too disorderly.

JOE FRANKENHEIM

[*Scoffing.*] You have the keys to the city gates, master?

KRATZER

That I have, so long as the commission of the whole brotherhood demand them not of me.

JOE FRANKENHEIM

How long, think you, will the commission still retain in hand the power here in Rothenburg?

KRATZER

Just so long, gentlemen, as it please God.

JOE FRANKENHEIM

[*Rises and pays.*] Kratzer hath been all his life a patient lambkin and a veritable chicken-heart.

BARCHART

Just like Christheinz. [*Laughter.*

OXENHANS

So they had fain prepared a year of jubilee; the widows and orphans should be comforted, the sick made well, the halt made to walk.

KILIAN

'Twas an empty hope.

BEHEIM

As if he too had not been an evangelical brother.

KILIAN

The brotherhood will come to an end ere Kirmess [1] time.

BEHEIM

Think of thine oath, and that thou hast sworn alliance to the brotherhood for an hundred and one years.

[1] Kirmess (*Kirchmesse, Kirchweihe*), properly the anniversary of the dedication of a church, is frequently combined with thanksgiving for the harvest, and hence usually comes in the fall.

JOE FRANKENHEIM

Good night, gentlemen and evangelical brothers, an ye can sleep now.

KILIAN

Holla, if so be ye deem I raised a finger at the time when Geyer took oath from us . . . Od, heaven hath prevented me from that. And were it otherwise: a forced oath is God loath.

KRATZER

[*Escorting the guests out.*] Good night, gentlemen, good night, good night.

[*Exeunt* FRANKENHEIM, BARCHART, OXENHANS, *and* KILIAN. *Pause.*

BEHEIM

Brothers, what wanted they here?

KRATZER

Surely nothing good.

GOPPOLT

Rumour hath it that the old council hath met together in secret sessions.

TÖPPELIN

There is a murmuring among the people; I've heard it too.

GOPPOLT

The saying goes that they wished to send messengers to the Leaguers' camp and pray that they be spared in the name of God.

CHRISTHEINZ

Sooner should they cast me into the deepest dungeon and then tumble it upon me ere I should pray for mercy.

KRATZER

I would that Menzingen were back from Schweinfurt.

CHRISTHEINZ

He will be here before the dawn. Mark how he will make the mice in the old council beg for mercy.

GOPPOLT

Kilian would fain wriggle out of the affair.

KUNRAT

'Tis a sultry night, this.

KRATZER

[*At the window, leaning half-way out.*] There will be rain. Mayhap even a thunderstorm.—Go home, brethren, lest ye get wet.

TÖPPELIN

A red glare so far as one can see. 'Tis truly by no means a small blaze.

KRATZER

Empty is the market-place; not in a long time hath it been so empty and dead.

GOPPOLT

And 'tis the eve of Pentecost, too.

CHRISTHEINZ

Are you out of humour, master?

KRATZER

I know not, brother. Mayhap that the Devil's overmastering guile will yet put the fear of death into us.

CHRISTHEINZ

Will you let your blood be chilled by vain discouragements and unseemly words of ill omen? When a man flees, he invites pursuit.

KRATZER

Ah, Heinz, I flee not at all, but I consider how Karlstadt hath spoken, saying that one must compel God and wrest things from him by prayer, so that He will redeem us, and then one sees that God doth natheless let the Devil have free sway. Or think of Thomas Münzer and his courage of faith, and how he would cry: "Smite tink-a-tank upon the anvil Nimrod, let your swords not grow cold, God goeth before us." How then doth God permit that the princes fall upon the poor believers with murder and blood, throttle and slash them, till hardly one cometh away with his life? Thus did it happen at Frankenhausen. There the poor folk were singing: "Now pray we to the Holy Ghost"; and so singing they were given to be trampled under the hooves of the horses, were cut down and smitten, and not one spared.

GOPPOLT

And yet will God hold fast to his word.

[*A sudden noise is heard, as of a post or*

tree toppling over. Immediately thereupon a brief howl of triumph. All are startled.

Christheinz

Od's body o' fear, what's that?

Goppolt

Let us go thither together and search into this.

Kunrat

'Twas on the market-place.

Beheim

It cannot have been far from where stands the new gallows that the peasant forces had erected.

Feistel

[*Rattling his keys, speaks through the window.*] Master!

Kratzer

What is it?

Feistel

Did ye hear the fall?

Kratzer

I should say so.—Aye.

Feistel

The new gallows is thrown down, here on the market-place.

Kratzer

I thought as much. Come in, Feistel.

CHRISTHEINZ

Those were men of the old party. Good night, Kratzer. Come, let us have a look. Mayhap we can seize one of them and give him the peasants' "hearty thanks" with the cudgel.

GOPPOLT

Good night.

KUNRAT

Good night.

BEHEIM

Good night.

TÖPPELIN

Good night.

KRATZER

I wish all of you a good rest, brothers.

[*Exeunt* GOPPOLT, CHRISTHEINZ, KUNRAT, BEHEIM, TÖPPELIN.

KRATZER

[*To the* PLAYERS *who are counting their money.*] Go to rest. A bed of straw is laid out in the stable. [*Putting things to rights.*] Ye'll have sung the song of Geyer for the last time. Let the Leaguers' horsemen write you a new one. [FEISTEL *enters and hangs up a bunch of keys.*] From what gate are they?

FEISTEL

From the Klingen Gate.—Shall the wench bide here?

MOLLY

[*Babbling in her sleep.*] Hallo, what is't?

Hallo, what is't? Hearest not, high up in the air? Art a heathen, Tellermann? Knowest not that Herodias must dance eternally? Here, Captain. —Aye, Captain. . . .

FEISTEL

They say she is of the Devil's guild, understandeth the bringing of storms and how to ride on greased sticks. But I believe it not.

KRATZER

Oh, let her sleep.

FEISTEL

Good night. [*Exit with the* PLAYERS.

KRATZER

[*Closes the shutters; suddenly he starts and turns.*] Who's there?—Is somebody here?

VOICE

I.

KRATZER

Hark! What sort of being is it?

VOICE

We cannot get well of the priests. Know you Brother Andrew no more?

KRATZER

[*Doubly startled.*] Karlstadt? For God's sake, whence comest thou, brother?

KARLSTADT

From Würzburg.

[*He emerges from the dark, tattered, dusty, distorted almost beyond recognition.*

KRATZER

[*Incredulous.*] Brother, who art thou?

KARLSTADT

Is thy heart so seared that thou knowest me no more?

KRATZER

Truly, I no longer knew thee, Brother Andrew.

KARLSTADT

But now thou knowest me?

KRATZER

Comest thou from Würzburg?

KARLSTADT

Yea, brother. With utmost effort did I save my poor life from them.

KRATZER

Merciful God, merciful God! Have ye been spinning such evil silk in the peasant camp?

KARLSTADT

[*Constantly groaning and breathing heavily.*] 'Tis hell at Würzburg. God, God! I am a faithful servant of the Word and think little enough of my miserable life, but I have had to look upon things . . .

KRATZER

Brother, what wilt thou here?

KARLSTADT

A drop of water. I have a wound on my leg—a drink, a bite of bread.

KRATZER

Brother, as God is my judge, I can no longer give thee hearth and home.

KARLSTADT

Nor is there any need.

KRATZER

The honourables put forth their heads, pry into my affairs, and unless the Steward's fortune should turn, then I may look for gallows and the rack.

KARLSTADT

Not very likely that it will turn.

KRATZER

Then there is no further tarrying for thee here in Rothenburg.

KARLSTADT

Brother, have no fear of that. Give me a whole garment, a piece of bread, a drink of water or wine, God will reward thee. Then will I shake from my feet the dust of this poor, God-cursed land and betake me to foreign parts. I have no comfort save this alone: that I have been true to my cause. Awhile did it seem as if the spring should appear on every hand, but all hath again gone to decay in the darkness.

KRATZER

O dear brother, how many a man will now shiver for the sun, when shadows and the night return.

KARLSTADT

Now they will again come hither with their false churchly usage: purgatory, bath-endowments,[1] absolution, worship of saints, sanctification of cheats, baptism of bells, holding of fasts, confession and mortification.

KRATZER

[*Brings food and drink.*] Here, eat, drink, and strengthen thee, Brother Andrew.

KARLSTADT

Brother, in these grievous times God hath shown me things . . .! Men are an atrocious. ferocious race. Food goeth against me when I think of the horrors. Before my seeing eyes did they hack a man in pieces and fling the bloody flesh at each other. They slaughtered him as one does a calf, and he defended himself with loud cries, so that I stopped both my ears and yet was filled with horror, and the sweat of fear broke out upon me. Then I thought to myself: it is God's will that these go to hell, and I fled from them.

[*There is a loud pounding on the outer door.*

1 Free baths given to the poor for the spiritual benefit of the donor.

MOLLY

[*Starting up out of sleep and springing up, cries.*] Captain! [*She rushes out.*

KRATZER

Hide thyself, brother. By all the wounds of God, an they find thee in my house, Master Jack the Reaper will string us both up on the same gallows. Out with thee, brother.

KARLSTADT

Holy St. Anna, help!

[*He is pushed by* KRATZER *into the little back room. Renewed knocking.*

KRATZER

Holla, what is it. Od's bodikins. 'Tis time for sleeping.

[*Exit into the corridor. A key is turned, a door opens, steps of armed men and voices become audible.* RECTOR BESENMEYER *enters, much exhausted. He limbers up his legs.*

RECTOR BESENMEYER

Marry, a bitter ride.

MENZINGEN

[*Entering.*] You held out bravely, brother, as if you had sat on a horse since boyhood.

RECTOR BESENMEYER

Sic, sic, sic!

MENZINGEN

[*To* KRATZER, *who re-enters.*] Brother, how doth it still stand with us in the city, now that they see my face no more?

KRATZER

Not well. To say the truth, brother, ill enough. The old party is beginning to stir. Doubting Thomas and the honourables show themselves in the market-place. The citizens are downcast, step aside, make obeisances, and salute humbly. Joe Frankenheim of the old party hath taken hold with his comrades and stopped in here, wanting to have the masses restored as of old. Made sharp speeches, threatening words; I had to endure devilish fear.

RECTOR BESENMEYER

O cordolio, o cordolio. The spool hath run empty, new yarn not to be found. What else of evil?

KRATZER

Brother Andrew is here again.

RECTOR BESENMEYER

Where?

KRATZER

[*Pointing.*] There behind the door.

RECTOR BESENMEYER

[*Calling softly as he goes out.*] Brother Andrew!

MENZINGEN

The grey wolf hath chased him and tousled his wool enough. When we warned him, he would not believe us.

GEYER

[*Appears in the door, calling behind him.*] Begone. Put oats in my horse's manger. Be quick, not long will our saddles hang.

MOLLY

[*Invisible.*] Aye, Captain.

GEYER

Molly!

MOLLY

Aye, Captain.

GEYER

Thou must be my messenger.

MOLLY

Aye, Captain.

GEYER

Come hither, look me in the face. What hast thou in thine eyes?

MOLLY

[*Appears before him.*] I know not.

GEYER

A spark of hellish fire. My wife hath sent a letter to me, writes very urgently, cajoling me

with honeyed words, asking whether I will not make a compact with the Steward. She journeys about to princes and priests to obtain their intercession. Thou shalt go to Rimpar with my answer to her.

MOLLY

Aye, Captain.

MENZINGEN

Is thy wedded wife at Rimpar, brother?

GEYER

Yea, brother. She thinks I shall come home, shake the rattle, and shoo the bogey-man from the child in its cradle. From which God preserve me. I was never a diaper-washer. With God, master!

KRATZER

Hearty thanks. What good news from Schweinfurt?

GEYER

Hunger and thirst. Serve something.

MENZINGEN

No trace of a messenger from the Margrave?

KRATZER

[*Stops on his way out.*] Messenger? Look for yourselves. The sky is red. The Margrave is burning and burning in our land. The villages are crashing in the fire. He writes his message to us with fire and blood.—How is it at Brettheim?

GEYER

They smell the smoke of the League. With the consent of a council I sent to all the villages about, mustered in a little company, all of them dispersed again.

[*Enter* KARLSTADT *and* BESENMEYER; *exit* KRATZER.

KARLSTADT

[*Weeping in nervous debility.*] God's blessing, brothers.

GEYER

Devil take the tailor. How hath he ruined your raiment!

KARLSTADT

Oh brother, ah brother!

GEYER

Have you grown as lily-livered as a Jew? [*He has dropped beside a table.*] Sit down beside us. How looks it at Würzburg?

KARLSTADT

[*In tearful rage.*] Murder, theft, rascality, brawling, whoring, drinking, blaspheming God, serving the Devil day and night, calling down the wrath of God, brother—what shall I say, what can I tell? Young children and tottering old men, lechery, shame, and vice, Sodom and Gomorrah!

GEYER

Did you think to find angel children and pious monks?—It is over-sultry; open the windows.

KRATZER

Brother, I dare not. Men are still sitting in the tap-room of the council hall, and should they see a light here . . .

[GEYER *writes on the table with chalk.*

RECTOR BESENMEYER

Saint Urban and his plague[1] have this time cheated the springtime of his summer. [*Sitting at the table with the others, sighing deeply.*] *Suspicatur animus nescio quid mali.*[2]

GEYER

Which is as much as to say: thy heart bodes ill. Mine too, brother. I have seen stars fall. As I hung on my nag just now, half sleeping and half waking, then I knew what that meant: new murder and the making of priests, monks, and nuns. . . . [*Drawing on the table.*] It rues me, it rues me sore——Have you other news for me?

KARLSTADT

No, brother.—But wheresoever a sensible man at Würzburg still hath some hope, he waits the hour of your returning. [*Pause.*

GEYER

[*As before.*] The gnawing wolf lies under my heart for so long as I have to live. [*Pause.*

[1] St. Urban is the patron saint of the vineyard, and his plague is drunkenness. There is also an allusion to the disastrous battle at Frankenhausen in 1525 on the 25th of May, which is St. Urban's day.

[2] "My soul suspects I know not what evil."

Rector Besenmeyer

'Tis a veritable cloister silence we are observing.

Geyer

The secret Emperor must go on sleeping. The ravens are again gathering in swarms. [*Suddenly altered.*] Wine, wine!—Götz hath gone toward the Steward? How many of the peasant troops do you estimate to be still in the camps?

Karlstadt

About twenty thousand.

Geyer

Wine, wine! Let us drink the lees together. [*To* Molly *who enters.*] Molly, go down into the cellar. Master Kratzer will give thee the wine that the council lately sent to us.

Kratzer

[*About to go off with the cellar keys, standing still.*] What shall I do with the chest, gentlemen?

Geyer

Have you jewels in it?

Menzingen

The papers of the commission, brother! There any man can see exactly who spoke in its sessions and what each one said.

Kratzer

[*Going out.*] Hush thee, Molly.

[*Exit with* Molly.

RECTOR BESENMEYER

[*After a pause, to* GEYER, *who is still drawing with chalk on the table.*] Brother, what did you mutter to yourself about the secret Emperor? Some there be that say the point of the quarrel was to overthrow the house of Hapsburg. The same ones also say that you have French backing. Your plan was to make the exiled Ulrich of Württemberg [1] into an evangelical German emperor.

GEYER

Brother, they have mounted toward the German crown as cocks climb to the highest perch.

RECTOR BESENMEYER

Brother Geyer, I trust you as I would not trust myself, but pray tell me: was the clamour in our realm raised up in the interest of King Francis, who is now a captive of the Emperor, and are those in the right who say that French stivers and suncrowns have been the best allies of the peasant cause?

1 Ulrich, Duke of Württemberg, 1487–1550. His extravagance estranged the people, he incurred the enmity of the Swabian League, and he drove the adherents of Ulrich von Hutten into the camp of his enemies by killing Ulrich's kinsman, Hans von Hutten, to whose wife he had been paying court, while his own wife Sabina, a niece of Emperor Maximilian (see note to p. 69), fled to Bavaria and fomented further opposition. Ulrich was driven from Württemberg in 1519, but attempted to return in 1525, after collecting money in France and men and money in Switzerland. Posing as a friend of the peasants, he invaded Württemberg; but his Swiss troops were recalled after the defeat of Francis I at Pavia, and Ulrich was soon driven out again.

GEYER

Brother, there never have been subtler intrigues on foot, and 'tis true that the wind blew strongly from the west. But shall we not hoist our sails, when we wish to drive eastward, merely because the wind blows from France?

RECTOR BESENMEYER

When the skipper would sail toward the east, sayest thou, brother. . . .?

GEYER

Whoso will journey to the newly discovered islands, he useth the winds as they blow. He can by no means always sail straight ahead, only he must preserve faith in himself and remain true to his goal.—[MOLLY *appears with two great jugs of wine.*] Wine!—Wine!—Wine from the Rhine! I will give Fortune's wheel yet one more turn.

KARLSTADT

I fear that with all our sweat and blood it can no longer be won.

GEYER

Pour out, Molly.—If I am still alive a week hence, thou shalt receive ten pairs of Cordovan shoes, and three cloaks to boot: a pink one from Mechlin, a Lombard one, a smoke-coloured one from Bruges. [*He holds her long hair in two ropes like reins.*] Thou shalt go in yellow silk as if thou hadst a saffron-yellow Nuremberger for a father. Open the windows, brother.

MOLLY

I need no cloaks and no Cordovan shoes.

GEYER

Drink, Molly! . . . Drink, thou tidbit! [*As she drinks.*] Thy hair is dearer to me than that of the most blessed Virgin. [*Pause.*

RECTOR BESENMEYER

[*Taking the beaker.*] O sorrow, sorrow. [*He drinks. To* KARLSTADT.] What do you know of Thomas Münzer, brother?

KARLSTADT

[*Who has hitherto been eating hungrily, speaks with hollow, trembling voice.*] They say he was captured and stretched on the rack, but afterwards chained to a wagon and sent to the lord of Mansfeld as booty.

RECTOR BESENMEYER

How favourably did the struggle begin, and with what great power, and how pitifully doth it end!

GEYER

Drink, brothers. Sadness dries the bones. Fortune is a house wherein one may dwell as guests an hour or two.—I am a free Franconian.

RECTOR BESENMEYER

Now they will again fill up all the well-springs.

KARLSTADT

Brother, they were not worthy to drink the pure springs.

RECTOR BESENMEYER

And yet I cry: long live the unsubdued, invincible truth, even as I understand it here.

KARLSTADT

How do you understand it?

RECTOR BESENMEYER

Reason is the source of all truth, but not an accursed whore, as Luther hath called it. It is the source of all fortune, the source of all right.

KARLSTADT

That opinion I cannot share. That is a pagan belief, brother. May be, the heathen teach how to live this earthly life well and happily . . . but the life beyond—!

[RECTOR BESENMEYER *shrugs his shoulders.*

GEYER

[*Sighing.*] In heaven, in heaven is joy and to spare, The angels go skipping in gaiety there.

RECTOR BESENMEYER

I have lived and laboured in the comforting intent upon which Count Eberhart of Württemberg established the university at Tübingen: to help dig the well-spring of life, from out which all the ends of the earth might draw inexhaustible consoling and wholesome wisdom wherewith to extinguish the baleful flames of human unreason and blindness.

MENZINGEN

They are filling up the well-springs; the destructive fire burns bright as day.

GEYER

Music, Molly!

KRATZER

[*Re-entering.*] Brother, you want music?

GEYER

Music I would have!

KRATZER

[*Anxiously.*] They are stealing about my house. It is late in the night. Consider that we are no longer safe, brothers.

MENZINGEN

Oh bosh. Let them come in, and have no fear. By my oath, I will—

KRATZER

[*Hastily.*] Hush, hush, brother!—Hush!—I heard steps.

[An iron object is used to knock loudly on the door. All are startled, keep silence, and reach for their swords.

MENZINGEN

[*Vehemently but softly.*] Go, open!—In God's name, go and open!

KRATZER

[*Does so, speaking loudly.*] Hey, ho, holla!

Patience, 'tis time to be asleep. [*Renewed knocking.*] This fellow is knocking as if he were bringing money.

[*Exit* Kratzer. *Sounds are heard; the door is opened and an armed man fairly falls in. Short, hoarse, and breathless cries.*

Kratzer's Voice

Who are you? What would you? Whom seek you?

Tellermann's Voice

Mort de ma vie! Hands off! *Traître! Faquin! Bourreau!* Rogue!

Geyer

[*Springs up.*] Tellermann!—Brother, brother! Here am I.

Tellermann

[*Summoning the remnant of his strength, rushes in, as far as the centre of the room; he is in a desperate state, in rags, wounded, bleeding, and bears the stump of a black flag; he glares wildly and searchingly about him, and shouts in the wrong direction.*] Captain, Captain!

Geyer

Here am I, here!

Tellermann

Brother Geyer, Brother Geyer!—Götz—cursed treachery—everything lost—Königshofen—

GEYER

[*Beside himself.*] Tellermann, brother, blood-brother, come to thy senses. Wine, Molly!—Tellermann!—Wine! Here, Molly, we'll pour it into him. Come to thy senses, brother.

TELLERMANN

[*Mumbles.*] Königshofen.

GEYER

What sayest thou, brother?

TELLERMANN

[*Unconscious.*] Königshofen.

RECTOR BESENMEYER

He is dying.

MENZINGEN

No further help for him.

KRATZER

[*Entering.*] Everything covered with blood. The threshold and the floor. He bleeds fearfully.

GEYER

[*Raging.*] He is dying. By St. Anne! Go fetch the barber! Why stand here?

TELLERMANN

[*Delirious.*] Come on, come on! Aye, come on! Scoundrel! Stand, rogue, stand!—The horsemen, the horsemen! The guns, let the guns loose upon them!—Fie, black death! *Mort de ma*

vie! Fear not, dear God-fearing comrades! Fear not! [*Shouting.*] Fe—ar—ye—not—I say—Fire the guns. Strike at the horses! Slash at the mounts!

GEYER

Brother Tellermann, come to thy senses.

TELLERMANN

Ah, ah! Berlichingen! Where is Berlichingen? Taken to his heels.—The powder is wet.—Cursed rabble! Don't take the horses from the cannon! Don't let them flee!—Lads, fear not, slash at the horses.—Hell and damnation! Hound, come on!

[*The unconscious man has been laid on a bench by* GEYER *and* MENZINGEN. *He grows quiet. Muffled murmur of voices outside.* KRATZER *has rushed to the chest and is stuffing the papers into the stove as fast as he can.* KARLSTADT *has risen, stepped over to* KRATZER, *and has reached a mute understanding with him. Thereupon he has gone out. The two old* PLAYERS *have entered unobserved and have settled down in their old places.*

GEYER

[*Bending over* TELLERMANN, *whose breathing grows ever fainter.*] Good Tellermann! Good old Tellermann!

[KARLSTADT *comes in again with a great sheet which he solemnly spreads on the ground. He,* MENZINGEN, *and* BESENMEYER *then lift the dying man from the bench, after a signal to* GEYER.

KARLSTADT

[*Solemnly.*] Here dies a Christian. So may he appear before God as a Christian abased to the earth in deep humility.

[TELLERMANN *is solemnly laid upon the outspread sheet. Pause.*

RECTOR BESENMEYER

[*Softly.*] What was he mumbling, brother?

GEYER

[*In a low voice.*] Königshofen.

KARLSTADT

That's the thirty thousand men with Götz.

MENZINGEN

[*Aloud.*] Then I am at an end with all I have and can go to a wedding at Strassburg.

[GEYER *is kneeling beside* TELLERMANN.

KARLSTADT

[*In the attitude of prayer.*] He is nearing his end.

GEYER

He sleeps. Good night.

[*He closes his eyes. Pause.*

KARLSTADT

The morning begins to dawn, I must away.

RECTOR BESENMEYER

Whither?

KARLSTADT

I have good friends, pious evangelicals, here and there in the land. If God give me further aid, I think to creep through into Switzerland.

MENZINGEN

[*To* GEYER.] What wilt thou do, brother?

GEYER

[*Rises.*] . . . I have read Marco Polo . . . read of that noble knight and traveller. What thinkest thou? Shall I mount a ship and travel over sea?

MENZINGEN

Wilt thou not seek escape toward France?

GEYER

Langenmantel writes me, and I carry the letter in my pocket these two weeks agone, that I should again enter French service. 'Twas at Pavia; we stood fast, Tellermann and I and a dozen free and sturdy men. Would not forsake the black banner under any conditions; defended ourselves against odds till sundown, and afterward did finally carry away the banner from them. Which came to the ears of King Francis of France, how we had so loyally fulfilled our oath, and pleased him mightily.

KARLSTADT

Come then, brother, let us wander together.

GEYER

[*Straightening up.*] Miscalculated! I have

served a godly cause. Now I will never serve another king. Molly, bring me my coat of mail. [*He stretches his limbs.*] I would I were St. Fortunatus [1] with his wishing-ring and his never-empty purse. But I am not.—Sleep, old Tellermann!—Holla, make music! My heart grows light. [*To* Molly *as she brings him his armour.*] Thanks, Molly. [*As the armour is put on him.*] Where is one in the first night after death?

Molly

With St. Gertrude.

Geyer

Where is one the second night after death?

Molly

With St. Michael.

Geyer

Then day after to-morrow I will remember you to St. Gertrude, and on the next day to St. Michael. —Fear not, sing! Ye will not wake the dead.

Claus

[*Sings with an old, quavering voice.*] When Florian Geyer did Weinsberg take . . .

Geyer

See whether my horse hath eaten; 'twill be a sharp ride. [*Exit* Molly.

[1] The hero of a German chap-book, who was given a miraculous purse by the goddess of fortune. He had no ring, but a hat which would carry him wherever he wished.

CLAUS

[*Sings.*] He seized the banner black and spake: Come follow, comrades mine, the castle must now be taken. . . .

[*Emotion overcomes* GEYER; *he has sat down and weeps. Pause.*

GEYER

—Gentlemen, I feel no shame before you. I did not weep for myself.

MOLLY

[*Returning.*] The horse is saddled.

GEYER

Pull the straps tighter, Molly, I must feel the iron.—Germany is a goodly land, the queen among all nations; hath gold, silver, bread, and wine enow, to keep us all in plenty. But there is no end to dissension. The priests bind her, the princes dissect her. But priests, princes, Fuggers, and Welsers, all feed upon her marrow. I thought I should change this. Who am I, that I should attempt it? What of it: "The truth I never will forsake" . . . My helmet, Molly.—"No man from me this boast shall take, Nor yet to frighten me avail Or sword or ban or outlawry" . . . Tighten the armlets, I will be buried in them . . . Although my loving mother weep That I this vain attempt did make, May God console her . . . [*Girding on his sword.*] Bend or break."—There, now I am composed. Farewell, dear brothers, it must needs be miraculous indeed, should we not meet again. Drink with me: in memory of Ulrich von Hutten!

In memory of Sickingen! His son is a renegade, hath gone over to the Leaguers.

KARLSTADT

[*In strange exaltation.*] Brother Geyer, the great fire lieth quenched, I think for a long time to come. But in the Gospel is written: the swaying reed will he not break and the glowing wick will he not put out.

MENZINGEN

And more than that: an God will, it may yet be mended.

GEYER

Be merry, brothers! Why should we not be merry? St. Agatha went to her marytr's death as to a dance. The holy maiden Anastasia scorned death. And we be men. [*To* TELLERMANN.] Adieu, comrade, adieu! [*He kneels beside him.*] Thou hast held out nobly, brother; hast fought stoutly, brother; and peace and battle hast honestly earned. Let go now. [*He endeavours to wrest the flag-stump from* TELLERMANN'S *firm clutch.*] Wilt not give it up? Come, brother, be content. Upon peasant honour, brother, I will be as true to it as thou. [*Standing up.*] Farewell. An fortune will, the Steward of Waldburg shall see it flutter once more.

[*Exeunt* GEYER, KRATZER, MENZINGEN, *and* KARLSTADT.

RECTOR BESENMEYER

[*Alone.*] Bloody Whitsuntide.

KRATZER

[*Enters, has heard him.*] The times are turned upside down. At Easter did the Saviour rise from the grave. At Pentecost they again nail him to the cross.—[*By the stove.*] The fire is out.

MENZINGEN

[*Enters.*] Geyer is gone. What will become of us?

RECTOR BESENMEYER

[*Touching the corpse.*] This fire is out.

MENZINGEN

When our dead peasant brothers enter into heaven, 'twill be a long train.

KRATZER

Shall we too be of that train?

MENZINGEN

They will bury us in the dogs' ditch.

RECTOR BESENMEYER

Of what account am I?—I am an old man.

THE CURTAIN FALLS

THE FIFTH ACT

A hall in the castle at Rimpar. It is night, through the high Gothic windows a faint glow of fire. At the right, door to a second room. In the extreme right foreground, doorway to the winding stair. On the left wall, two locked doorways.

Before Dame von Grumbach, *a pale young woman, stands* Molly; *a horse-boy stands near by.*

Anna von Grumbach

[*Vehemently.*] Od, give me the letter.

Molly

Thou hast driven the chain into my mouth.

Anna von Grumbach

The letter. Wilt thou or not?

Molly

I know not who thou art.

Anna von Grumbach

Squire William von Grumbach's wedded wife am I, whose sister Florian Geyer hath in marriage.

Molly

Then bring me to her.

ANNA VON GRUMBACH

My sister-in-law lieth sick abed, she cannot see thee. Give me the letter.

MOLLY

I've got no letter.

ANNA VON GRUMBACH

Thou hast no letter? Peter, now on a sudden she hath no letter. Then thou shalt be seasoned with the lash.

PETER

[*Good-humouredly to* MOLLY.] Why wench, what dost thou? Come to thy senses, do. Be not a fool, give her the letter.

MOLLY

I've got no letter.

ANNA VON GRUMBACH

Help, blessed St. Anne, the she-rogue lieth herself out of body and soul, betrayeth herself unto the very gallows. Hath she not said ere now that she had come from Florian Geyer with word for my sister-in-law?

MOLLY

Messages by word of mouth hath he given me, naught else.

ANNA VON GRUMBACH

[*In fear and fury.*] Oh thou bedevilled, devil-ridden, devilish monkey, I will have thee racked in such fashion that thy message shall issue from

thy mouth and nose, till thou spittest blood; and thou shalt be mindful of thy stubbornness. Give up that letter.

MOLLY

Thou hast driven the chain into my mouth, I bleed.

ANNA VON GRUMBACH

[*Seeks to take the letter from her by violence.*] Hold her tight, Peter! Peasant whore. 'Tis coming to an end, your cursed, black, hellish brotherhood.

PETER

Wench—give up what thou hast. Florian Geyer's wife is no longer here. No man knows whither she and the child have fled. To Nuremberg or otherwhere. Thou'lt find her not. An thou givest the lady the letter, she will spare neither cost nor pains . . .

ANNA VON GRUMBACH

That will I not, so help me God.—I had much rather suckle a wolf than carry messages for the Geyers. Heretical, traitorous brood, outlaws and peace-breakers, let it be known to every man: I have naught in common with them. Begone, out of my sight! She bears poison in her eyes as 'twere an adder. Be off, viper!

[*Exit* PETER *with* MOLLY. DAME GRUMBACH, *alone, steps hastily to the window and listens. Distant shooting. She sighs heavily.* URSEL, *the old janitress, enters.*

Anna von Grumbach

Is anybody here?

Ursel

I, your ladyship.

Anna von Grumbach

The windows rattle!—Shooting!

Ursel

Go to bed, my lady; it hath already lessened notably.

Anna von Grumbach

God knows how 'twill end, Ursel.

Ursel

Why, well. They shoot for joy, saith the cook. I'll swear 'tis Leaguers' cannon and not the peasants'. Lay you down in peace, your ladyship.

Anna von Grumbach

Naught but distress and dread in these times.

Ursel

My lady, the cook in the kitchen hath sworn mighty oaths, saying that the peasant uprising is now wholly laid low; for Peasant George, saith the cook, hath now become master of them throughout the German nation. Go then and lay you down to rest. An you remain stubborn and abide by your hard head . . . truly, you'll not endure it, you'll come down with the fever.

ANNA VON GRUMBACH

Ursel, I cannot sleep. My bed is worse to me than a red-hot grate.

URSEL

I know a comforting prayer, will surely bring you rest.

ANNA VON GRUMBACH

Wild, terrible dreams have I had.

URSEL

Then will I draw a cross on the wall above you, no evil dream shall further afflict you.

ANNA VON GRUMBACH

Ursel, I saw my husband in a dream, bound to the pillory, tortured with glowing pincers, and at the last . . . Ursel, I shiver, I shudder, when I think upon it.

URSEL

Then think not upon it. That is the evil one, he torments poor souls asleep.

ANNA VON GRUMBACH

I know, I know it well, Ursel, 'tis naught but hellish jugglery and devilish delusion, but yet it was a great horror to me. The hangman tore the heart out of his breast and smote his face with it.

URSEL

Oh, as I say, as I say, offer a candle in the chapel . . .

Anna von Grumbach

And it did still quiver and beat—[*Trembling and with chattering teeth.*]—my husband's heart.

Ursel

[*Attending to her mistress, who has sunk exhausted upon a chair.*] Oh, as I say. Place a consecrated candle beside your bed, then the angels will come and chase the devils away. [*Loquaciously.*] There was once a highwayman, he offered a single candle and a penny on Candlemas Day. At last it came to pass that he must needs put his head through the hempen window. And so he hung on the gallows. Then came the Devil with a great stink, reached out for him with his claws and lashed his tail for very wrath, would have carried the poor soul to hell. But the angels stood against it and would not suffer it. Then said God to the highwayman: I can do naught; thou must fight with the Devil. Od's terror, how was the highwayman afeared in heart. But the angels found an escape for him. The candle he had once offered they put into his one hand, and the penny with a cross upon it into the other. And since the Devil saw that—what was left for him to do? He fled in all haste and ran away. Come, come, be at peace, I will lead you to bed.

Anna von Grumbach

[*Led by* Ursel.] Abide with me, Ursel. Ursel, abide with me!

Sartorius

[*Carefully dressed, enters from the winding*

stair.] *Bona dies,* dear my lady. God give you fortune and health. How is it with your worship, my lady?

ANNA VON GRUMBACH

[*Coldly.*] What seek you here?

SARTORIUS

My lady, doth your grace know me no more? I was on the very point of mounting to the tower chamber. 'Tis a clear night and good for questing among the stars.

ANNA VON GRUMBACH

Then I had rather you descended the tower into the deepest cellar, instead of mounting up into your hellish observatory. Whence come you hither? Who hath let you into the castle?

SARTORIUS

[*Pale.*] God help me, your ladyship, I understand not your worship. Am I not the appointed servant of his highness, your worthy husband? Have I not served him without sparing myself day or night, waking and journeying for his sake?

ANNA VON GRUMBACH

You have betrayed him! Misled him into disgrace and destruction with your scoundrelly, anti-Christian counsel.

SARTORIUS

Lords are masters, they do as they will.

ANNA VON GRUMBACH

Lords are masters, sayest thou to me now? Then art thou tenfold a master of all hellish black art. Hast thou not deluded him with false prophecies of angels: the see of Würzburg would soon pass away and receive a secular lord?

SARTORIUS

Your ladyship, on that point quarrel with God. We stood by, your husband and I, as the lad sat before the crystal and held converse with the angels. So did it come from his lips. I added no word.

ANNA VON GRUMBACH

Od's fiddlesticks! What art thou prating? Wilt thou hang the bells on me as on my squire? Because thou art Magister, forsooth? In the seven deadly sins art thou master, but not in the seven free arts. How comest thou here, what seekest thou here?

SARTORIUS

My lady, truly you do me grave wrong. I did expect a different reception, in God's name. A man bends his back, crouches over papers the whole night through, twists and turns, squeezes and tweezes himself in every fashion like a Merry Andrew, and has naught but gall and wormwood for it.

ANNA VON GRUMBACH

[*With scoffing laughter.*] Squeeze and tweeze thyself, thou?—Play the idler, dress up, drink,

seek lewdness, dance, go bird-liming, such hath been thy labour, aside from sheer filth and fraud. Leave me at least undisturbed by thine alchemy. I have seen naught of the gold that thou hast pretended thou couldst make. 'Tis naught but delusion and vain jugglery. What wouldst thou here? Take thy leave, go.

SARTORIUS

[*Anxious, almost weeping.*] Ah, have compassion, my lady. Whither should I go now? I have escaped hither only with the greatest effort. On all hands fleeing peasants are racing and running, with riders of the League behind them, cutting and slashing at them, slaying as many as fall into their hands.

ANNA VON GRUMBACH

That is thy affair. What is that to me?

SARTORIUS

Ah, have compassion, dear my lady.

ANNA VON GRUMBACH

[*Calls resolutely through the window.*] Peter! Hi, Peter! Come up here!

SARTORIUS

In the name of all the saints, what do you? You are a Christian, have mercy.

WILLIAM VON GRUMBACH

[*Appears suddenly, followed by* HANS THE SHEPHERD.] Devil take the man that hath mercy on thee. Put him in irons!

SARTORIUS

[*Seized by* HANS, *pleading and begging in childish fear.*] Ah, your honour. Ah, your worship. Noble lord, do not do that. I have served honestly and faithfully.

HANS THE SHEPHERD

A pox to you, hold still there, cease your blubbering. You'll have time and a-plenty for that. —Ah to be sure, to be sure, I know the road. Many a rogue have I helped along it. Od's zooks, thou lubber, now hold thy tongue.

[*He strikes him upon the mouth.* SARTORIUS *becomes quiet, glaring in mute fear.*

ANNA VON GRUMBACH

[*Has greeted* GRUMBACH *but hastily; now she shouts after* SARTORIUS, *who is being led off by* HANS.] Now he writhes like a bagpiper, cries woe and alas. Thou botcher, thou scoundrel, thou simpleton, thou ninny. Thou hast tyrannised over the whole house. Arch-rogue that thou art, thy meet punishment were the stake.

[*Exeunt* SARTORIUS *and* HANS.

WILLIAM VON GRUMBACH

Content thee now, I am not alone.

ANNA VON GRUMBACH

Hast thou ever believed me, I wonder? I had no sooner scented the fellow than I knew of what stuff he was. Came in here as if naught had happened, thought he would escape altogether. Had no luck in that; I gave him pepper.

WILLIAM VON GRUMBACH

[*More vehemently.*] Content thee now, I am not alone! Thomas von Hartheim hath come with me.

ANNA VON GRUMBACH

Whence come you?

WILLIAM VON GRUMBACH

We lead a battalion of the Margrave's horse. Have orders to join the Steward.

ANNA VON GRUMBACH

Where stands the Steward?

WILLIAM VON GRUMBACH

It cannot be far; toward Würzburg the sky is red. Everywhere peasants in flight; running as if the Devil were clutching at their backs. Some twenty our men have throttled and cut down. I finished two, Thomas von Hartheim split the heads of three. Serve us something, Anna. We'll only take a brief snack for breakfast and then ride on.

URSEL

[*Has stood to one side, she steps forward and kisses* GRUMBACH'S *hand.*] Oh most worthy Squire, ah most worthy Squire! God's blessing on you, most worthy Squire. How the dear gracious mistress grieved for you.

WILLIAM VON GRUMBACH

'Tis well, Ursel, let be.

ANNA VON GRUMBACH

Go, be quiet, Ursel, prepare the gentlemen a bath. [*Several strokes of a bell are heard in the village below.*] Oh, what is that? [*Exit* URSEL.

WILLIAM VON GRUMBACH

[*Taking off his helmet.*] Pox, Anna, 'tis nothing ill. I've turned over the village to the men for plunder. Many of our poor folk have returned home again, more timid than rabbits. Have hidden and stowed themselves away, but must out all the same.

ANNA VON GRUMBACH

Art thou compacted, William, with the Swabian League?

WILLIAM VON GRUMBACH

So I hope, in God's name. But say naught of that now.

ANNA VON GRUMBACH

[*Wringing her hands.*] Hadst thou only . . . O, hadst thou only listened to my warning and pleading, and not despised them and thrown them to the winds!

WILLIAM VON GRUMBACH

Be still, I say! A raven flew before the sun, I could not see clearly.

ANNA VON GRUMBACH

Did I not warn thee of that Geyer, that heretic and desecrator of churches, who hath always kept

friendship with the men of Aufsess,[1] those outlaws, peace-breakers, and Bohemian heretics?

WILLIAM VON GRUMBACH

Stop that now.

ANNA VON GRUMBACH

Should it be possible that Christ had let His holy Church go astray for so many hundred year? [HARTHEIM *enters.*] God's welcome to you, Sir Knight.

HARTHEIM

Blessed days to you, my lady.

ANNA VON GRUMBACH

Pray take a seat.

HARTHEIM

Not yet, my gracious lady. I would only that our horses recover strength a little. We must soon be at work again. Now there must be good works in Luther's sense, that is, with the sword.

WILLIAM VON GRUMBACH

Have compassion upon the poor folk, thus said Luther. Cut, beat, kill, whosoever can, thus wrote Luther. I will not lag behind.

ANNA VON GRUMBACH

So be it, Sir Knight, let vigour speak and stop the mouths of all devilish, hellish, factious folk.

[1] Aufsess is a family name, but also contains a play on the word *aufsässig*, "rebellious." She is thinking of the rebels of 1525.

I said to my wedded lord from the beginning, why doth his grace the Margrave negotiate so solemnly with that black rabble, those snot-nosed, rascally, murderous peasant mobs? He might well have worked over them betimes with fire and fist and commanded them to be quiet, and if they would not hear, he should have had their asses' ears plugged up with gun-balls.

HANS THE SHEPHERD

[*Enters from the winding stair.*] By your leave, Squire, there is a party of riders in the courtyard. Claim to be Leaguers, have red crosses sewed on their sleeves.

WILLIAM VON GRUMBACH

[*With rising excitement.*] Take their horses. By God's precious passion, be quick and lead the gentlemen up here. [HANS *goes out.*

HARTHEIM

[*In joyful surprise.*] Huzza! Leaguish riders! [*He shouts down from the window.*] Huzza, comrades! Here, Ansbach!

ANSWERING CRY

Swabian League!

HARTHEIM

Grant me a moment's leave, your ladyship, I will bid the gentlemen welcome. [*Exit.*

ANNA VON GRUMBACH

Who hath entered the court?

WILLIAM VON GRUMBACH

Roving riders of the League. Now let food be served, Anna, till the table groan. There must be a banquet.

ANNA VON GRUMBACH

In God's name, why standest here? Move thy feet and bid them welcome.

LAURENCE VON HUTTEN

[*Enters quickly.*] Let me tell you, we have been on the heels of Florian Geyer. We are seeking Florian Geyer.

WILLIAM VON GRUMBACH

In my house? What have I to do with Geyer, that outlaw and peace-breaker?

LAURENCE VON HUTTEN

Is thy sister at home?

ANNA VON GRUMBACH

Long since over the hills and far away, God knows whither. We know not.

LAURENCE VON HUTTEN

That thou mayest know how to act, William, the peasant war is lost and done for. A battle took place at Königshofen, and not an hour had passed when the Steward caused joyful salvos to be fired a second time. Now art thou of the League with hide and hair or thou art altogether a lost man.

WILLIAM VON GRUMBACH

By God's precious bones! What is the meaning of that?

LAURENCE VON HUTTEN

Brother-in-law, I have leaped from my nag and mounted these stairs as fast as my legs would carry me. Thou art in danger, William, I will not conceal that from thee. They have defamed thee in the camp of the League as if thou too hadst thy feet over-deep in the laced boot.

WILLIAM VON GRUMBACH

'Tis false, ten and a hundred times a lie. I have been of the Margrave's party and a servant of his.

LAURENCE VON HUTTEN

But in the chapter-hall thou didst speak improper and sharp words against the Bishop, as if thou wouldst seriously attack him and pull him out of his skin. That is remembered against thee, William.

WILLIAM VON GRUMBACH

[*With a forced laugh.*] Od! Have ye found a grain of oats in my water and therefore concluded that I had swallowed a horse? What is the peasant grievance to me? There is hardly a man in the whole empire to whom the peasants' brotherly love was from the beginning so repugnant as to me. I was never fain to share even with my own natural and bodily brothers and sisters, to say naught of doing so with these snotty peasants.

LAURENCE VON HUTTEN

Then was it an error of thine, when they took their bread-knives in the chapter-hall and thrust them into the door, to do the like and say thou wert thrusting it into the heart of the Bishop of Würzburg.

WILLIAM VON GRUMBACH

Now may the thunder strike me on the spot. . . . An that was done, I will be damned to hell. And whoso saith that to me, by the throne of God, he shall not say it a second time. Let him die and choke on his devilish, rascally lie!

LAURENCE VON HUTTEN

No more of this, they are coming up the stairs. But if thou lovest thy life, conceal Florian Geyer not.

WILLIAM VON GRUMBACH

Search the castle through from tower to basement, from the women's chambers down to the cistern, and if ye find him, then let me be cut in four parts and let the hangman set them up on the four corners of my castle and nail my head up over the pigsty as a monument. I know no more of Florian Geyer than you.

[SCHERTLIN *and* HARTHEIM *enter simultaneously from the stairs, in the most animated conversation.*

SCHERTLIN

[*Aloud.*] Then on that account you need never throw a leg over a saddle again. The bottom of the war is out, it nears its end.

LAURENCE VON HUTTEN

[*Presenting.*] This is the honourable Sebastian Schertlin, lately knighted at Pavia before the castle by the Vice-Regent of Naples with his own hand.

SCHERTLIN

Naught to boast of, your ladyship.

ANNA VON GRUMBACH

Welcome, Sir Knight. You have worn your knightly spurs in manly wise. We have awaited your coming hither with great yearning.

SCHERTLIN

Have ye also suffered much from these peasant devils?

WILLIAM VON GRUMBACH

Irreparable damage and harm. Many villages destroyed, two strong houses burned to the ground.

ANNA VON GRUMBACH

Pray take a seat, your honour, and tarry a little. I will go and have the bath made ready for you.

WILLIAM VON GRUMBACH

Do my house this honour, Sir Knight.

SCHERTLIN

Thanks, worthy Squire. I will gladly accept and loosen my armour a little. We have worked stoutly, not to make a boast of it.

HANS THE SHEPHERD

[*Enters to report.*] By your leave, Squire.

WILLIAM VON GRUMBACH

What is it?

HANS THE SHEPHERD

What shall we do with the peasants that we have brought in?

WILLIAM VON GRUMBACH

How many are there of them?

HANS THE SHEPHERD

About twenty I counted.

SCHERTLIN

Gentlemen, let us follow the example of George the Steward. When we have rested, eaten, and drunk, then let the prisoners be brought up and we will try them. May the blue fire . . . Where have I seen thee, fellow?

HANS THE SHEPHERD

At Pavia, Sir Knight.

SCHERTLIN

Didst fight too at Pavia? 'Tis well, comrade, how comest thou hither, comrade?

HANS THE SHEPHERD

I was in the pay of the Rothenburgers. They would fain have sent me to Würzburg with the cannon. There I was to join the peasants:—that

I would not. Have hitherto sought and found my service and bread with princes and lords, so will I henceforth live and die with the imperial nobility, with princes and lords.

SCHERTLIN

Spoken like a true lansquenet; art a sturdy honest fellow.

[*Exit* HANS. KUNZ VON DER MÜHLEN *and* WOLF VON KASTELL *enter, likewise from the stairs. They are disputing vehemently, but in low tones, peer about them, look searchingly at* GRUMBACH *and at first pay no heed to the rest.*

WILLIAM VON GRUMBACH

[*With forced cordiality.*] Good luck, dear comrades. [*To* KASTELL.] Welcome, your grace. Be pleased to honour my house. Pray enter.

WOLF VON KASTELL

By your leave, Squire von Grumbach, take it not amiss. We have placed sentinels before all gates and portals. You doubtless know full well whom we seek.

WILLIAM VON GRUMBACH

Although I know not, gentlemen, what outlaw and rogue ye are on the heels of, nor can in any wise imagine what ye can hope to find in my house, yet may ye do herein according to your pleasure, and if it be your desire leave no mouse-hole unsearched in all my castle, in halls, cellars, and stalls: so help me God. But now tell me first

of all, gentlemen, how did ye get clear of the garrison?

LAURENCE VON HUTTEN

'Slife, brother-in-law! That was a right excellent cavalry feat, undertaken by Heinz Steward and Marshal with three hundred horse; they came riding to us from Königshofen and sent fifty men in advance as far as the palisade. We of Our Lady's Mountain recognised them from the ramparts, let down a ladder, and in came Lienhart Eifelstätter with three others. These brought us glorious news and gave us blessed comfort beyond words, so that all in the castle grew fairly dizzy for great joy and went running and shouting through all the chambers. For laughter had long since been driven out of the garrison, and there was a lack of bread, of relish, of drink. A little more, and each had needs must drink of his own fountain. Moreover, there was lack of powder and ball. Also the peasants had already laid down a great piece of our wall with the Rothenburg cannon, which was rapping most evilly. Watching and waking had made many of our gentlemen worn and weary unto death, they had truly not been able to withstand a second storm. But thus help had come to us in time of need. So the warder on the middle tower must play the peasants the tune:

Hast thou the jest repented,
Then hie thee home again.

The warder of the front tower led shouting and huzzaing men to the bastion, that he might

play a serenade to the Würzburgers in the town below. This he did with joy, and with loud and blaring trumpet did he play them "poor Judas." But we three, Kunz von der Mühlen, Wolf von Kastell, and I, we could restrain ourselves no longer. We wanted to be doing and to help beat and finish the remnant of the peasants. So we climbed out of the castle with the Leaguers, and rightly did we find what we sought. The hardest battle was fought at the last in the open field. In the entire peasant war there was not such a bitter struggle as that about Ingolstadt.

ANNA VON GRUMBACH

I heard the shooting, gentlemen.

[SCHERTLIN *has been led out by* GRUMBACH *during the narrative.*

WOLF VON KASTELL

[*Raging.*] And I say and maintain that the day is not yet won so long as we have not overthrown Florian Geyer.

[*Exit* ANNA VON GRUMBACH.

LAURENCE VON HUTTEN

[*Before he drinks out of a huge wine-jug that a maid has placed on the table.*] There are enough who persist in the opinion that Geyer was not in the battle at all.

KUNZ VON DER MÜHLEN

With my own eyes did I see Geyer fighting on the wall. Twice did I cut at him and struck him

twixt glove and armlet. Squire, I know Geyer all too well, and I heard his clear voice at the very beginning, when we commenced our assault on the castle at Ingolstadt and were still afar in the field.

WOLF VON KASTELL

Geyer himself was there, or call me a black peasant. It was no other than he that led the little band and threw it into the castle of Ingolstadt; else they had hardly given us such obstinate resistance, filling the moat with our dead. But if Geyer steal away from us, then we shall have the laced boot again, ere one year hath passed by.

WILLIAM VON GRUMBACH

[*Appears in the open door of the great hall, from which light streams.*] Gentlemen, food and drink are already on the table. Pray come and honour my kitchen. The Almighty be my judge that I had rather be sitting on my steed and using my powers in the service of right and of true evangelical freedom. But since ye have won the victory without me, and sent the peasants home with broken heads, it is my judgment that we should arrange a small celebration and banquet, and after so long a time of distress and danger indulge ourselves somewhat with wine and wassail.

[*The knights follow* GRUMBACH *silently into the banquet hall. Now one hears the sound of those banqueting in the adjoining room, some shots in the distance, and finally the tramp of many feet coming up the winding stair. Thereupon* HANS THE SHEPHERD *appears*

and shouts back down the stairs, while he drags the first peasant prisoner along by a rope.

HANS THE SHEPHERD

Up, you damned bumpkins, the gallows is up, and Dalinger stands by it. Stand still, Horck!

[*About fifteen ragged, trembling, deathly frightened peasants, among them one woman, and five or six with white staves in hand, are driven in by two cavalrymen. The hands of each are bound, and each is forced to hold his trousers with these bound hands, as they would otherwise fall down.*

HANS THE SHEPHERD

[*To the peasant whom he is leading by a noose around his neck.*] Now ye shall learn to beg, but with your feet on a red-hot grid.

FIRST PEASANT

[*Crazed with fear.*] *Batientia, Fintzi, Domine.*[1]

HANS THE SHEPHERD

Promising the Holy Virgin a candle as long as the Strassburg minster.

FIRST PEASANT

Thou art a Christian, lord. Here is the staff; the Steward hath pardoned me.

[1] A garbled, meaningless Church-Latin tag.

HANS THE SHEPHERD

Od's zookers, what is that to me? Thou art as lost as the soul of a Jew.

[*He strikes the white staff out of his hand.*

FIRST HORSEMAN

Devil take the man that lets a peasant live. I have laid some twenty of them out cold.

SECOND HORSEMAN

'Tis a poor timid lot, they let themselves be snared like rabbits.

FIRST HORSEMAN

We shot them down from the trees, so that they fell like storks from their nests.

SECOND HORSEMAN

I had pursued a company as far as Giebelstatt with my racing squadron. All laughing knocked out of them. They crawled into the bushes, some into the hedges on the inside of the castle moat. Couldn't follow them up on horseback. So we cried to them that whoso among them should stab the others dead, him we would promise safety to life and limb.

HANS THE SHEPHERD

Od! May the thunder strike thee.

FIRST HORSEMAN

Rose up a lad and undertook the thing. So he stuck his peasant brothers to death as if they had been calves and pigs. Ended five in no

time. But the sixth would not yield, put up a masterly resistance, and the two fell to wrestling, topside Harry, lopside Larry; 'twas comical to see. And when they were well entwined and enlaced with each other, they made a misstep by chance, rolled down the embankment into the moat, and both were drowned.

WOLF VON KASTELL

[*Tipsy, restless, comes from the banquet hall.*] Oho!—Brother rascals, are ye eating humble pie? Every one of you scoundrels knows that he must die. But if ye do not come out fully with the pure truth, ye shall be racked and tortured in such wise. . . . Speak thou, where sawest thou Florian Geyer last?

HANS THE SHEPHERD

Geyer is a courtier, a sycophant, a sh——.

WOLF VON KASTELL

A hundred florins are set on his head. A hundred and fifty for the man that brings him alive to the Steward.

HANS THE SHEPHERD

Od, then I would I had my measure of wine and some cold meat in my belly. I will take dogs and go hunting him, and where I find him I will plunge my knife into his heart and drink his blood with great joy.

WOLF VON KASTELL

Where sawest thou Florian Geyer last?

First Peasant

When we had gone away from Würzburg with the entire peasant army, thinking to join our brothers at Königshofen, we marched out and up the ascent at Heidingsfeld. When we were at the top, a man came galloping across to us on horseback. 'Twas Geyer.

Laurence von Hutten

[*Tipsy, in the doorway.*] Wolf, I drink to the Swabian League as it is now, and so long as it doth not war upon the petty nobility.

Wolf von Kastell

I'll drink with thee. But now come hither, this brother ragpicker will report to thee whether Geyer was in the battle or no.

Laurence von Hutten

Speak, peasant rogue.

First Peasant

So help me God, I know no more. Soon thereafter the Steward's riders fell upon us. Arose a shout among the enemy: flee, dear God-fearing peasant brothers, and then the great flight began.

William von Grumbach

Gentlemen, do ye run away from the manger? There is fresh wine now, and the sucking pig stands on the table. [*Entering with the beakers, he sings.*] "O thou wretched Judas, what is it thou'st done?" [*Laughing brutally.*] Od's lung,

what a show ye make, dear evangelical brothers. —Oho! Will your trousers not stay up?

Hans the Shepherd

I took the supporters out of their trousers, worthy Squire, so they can't run away.

[*The knights laugh wildly.*

Schertlin

[*Drunk, enters and joins them.*] Worthless, lousy crew, no merit to be earned of you for a cavalryman. Now ye are laid low, by the grace of God, and some sixty thousand of you stricken dead with God's aid, one must be content to ride home as poor as when he went forth.

Wolf von Kastell

Have ye no short Bohemian swords about, for cutting off hands?

[*The peasants fall on their knees, trembling and whimpering.*

Schertlin

Ye know what Luther hath said and writ: whoso hath mercy upon these black peasant devils, upon him hath God no mercy.

All Peasants

[*In confusion.*] Have mercy on us, gentlemen, we are pardoned folk.

Hans the Shepherd

Braggarts, bed-pressers, liars, lazy-bones. Ye lie.

WOLF VON KASTELL

[*Riding whip in hand.*] Out with it now. Speak, bumpkins. How many doors shall the noble have, hey? Answer: as many as he will.

PEASANTS

As many as he will. [*Knights laugh.*

WOLF VON KASTELL

How many strong houses may the noble have?

PEASANTS

As many as he will.

WOLF VON KASTELL

[*Cracking his whip at the peasants.*] Hey, hallo, tally-ho! The bloody dysentery afflict you.

LAURENCE VON HUTTEN

[*Also lashing at them with a whip.*] Black dogs!

SCHERTLIN

[*Likewise.*] Arch-fools, scoundrels!

WILLIAM VON GRUMBACH

[*Likewise.*] Rogues, scamps, to the pen with them!

[*They and the horsemen have whipped the peasants out of the room. Exhaustion, wild, drunken laughter, new refreshment by drinking.*

SCHERTLIN

Come on, pious comrades. Now that work is done, let's play "German Lords" for a little.

KUNZ VON DER MÜHLEN

[*As he goes out.*

Clothing off and clothing on,
Eat and drink and sleep anon,
That's the work the German lords have done.

SCHERTLIN

Gentlemen, and where shall we bed our wenches?

WOLF VON KASTELL

Will ye play at dice?

SCHERTLIN

Strange question! Shall soldiers have a banquet, and no dicing?

[*All go into the banquet hall, where they immediately begin to sing:*

We have nor care nor sorrow
For the empire glorious;
What though it fall to-morrow?
'Tis all the same to us.

[MOLLY *steals in anxiously and cautiously. She starts when she hears the shouts in the adjoining room. She is about to return from whence she entered, but starts again and listens. The faint metallic noise of an armed man slowly mounting the winding stair is audible.* MOLLY, *grown strangely uncertain, does not know whether to remain or flee, and finally re-*

treats into the remotest dark corner. Now a knight in black is seen painfully staggering up the last steps. He clings to a door-post. His visor is closed. With a last effort he endeavours to unbuckle his helmet.

MOLLY

[*Softly.*] Captain.

GEYER

[*Starts.*]

MOLLY

[*Louder.*] Captain.

GEYER

[*Opens his visor with an effort.*]

MOLLY

Captain.

[*She is already by his side, endeavouring to take off his helmet.*

GEYER

[*Stammers.*] Unbuckle my helmet.

MOLLY

Captain, thou must be gone, thou canst not tarry here.

GEYER

Hush.

[MOLLY *claps her hand to her mouth.*

Geyer tries to speak, but cannot. Molly supports him and searches anxiously. Geyer points to something. Molly perplexed. At last she understands. On the table stands a jug of wine, she leads the enfeebled man toward it. He cannot go farther. Like a flash she brings the jug. He reaches for it greedily, embraces it, and drinks thirstily. She supports the jug as for a child. Geyer has dropped on one knee, removes the jug, whimpers and drinks again, then he slips down to the ground. He sits with his back against a chair, lays his head back, opens his mouth, and draws a deep breath.

Molly

[*Is at a loss and frightened when he closes his eyes; she kneels beside him and whispers to him rapidly.*] Captain, thou must be gone, death and destruction are here.

Geyer

[*Opens his eyes.*] Where am I?

Molly

Thou art at Rimpar, and riders of the League are here.

Geyer

I—am—doubtless—dead?

MOLLY

Captain, thou must be gone, as true as I live, Captain; else it is too late.

GEYER

[*Smiles and looks at her wide-eyed.*] I am content here.

LAURENCE VON HUTTEN

[*Enters, shouting and stamping.*] A fine game, a cursed game. How do ye call the game, gentlemen? Is that "pranking"? Then the Devil may play at that game. I've got a whole dish of barley-porridge thrown in my face.

[*He cleanses himself by the window. Diabolical laughter in the other room. Without observing* GEYER, *he goes out again.*

GEYER

[*Wholly conscious.*] Leaguers are here?

[*He rises with effort.*

MOLLY

I know where the horses are, Captain. The servants are drunk, fear no evil.

GEYER

Was not that Laurence von Hutten?

MOLLY

I know not.

William von Grumbach

[*Drunk, enters.*] Pox, girl, what dost thou here?

Geyer

William!

William von Grumbach

[*Frightened to the utmost.*] What? Who? Who art thou, what wilt thou?

Geyer

Knowest me not?

William von Grumbach

Who art thou? What wilt thou? I know thee not.

Geyer

Hast short memory, an thou knowest me not.

William von Grumbach

Pox, short memory, long memory, what is that to me? Shall I let myself be quartered alive and my body burned to ashes by the knacker? Look thou to that, I know thee not.

Geyer

'Tis but an hour of sleep I want.

William von Grumbach

I know thee not. What wilt thou in my house? I know only of one who boasted he would play a tune such that princes and priests should learn

how to dance. But he knew not rightly how to play, and so they broke his lute in twain on his own head. Now the princes and priests have begun the music . . .

GEYER

I know, I know, there is blood and gold.

WILLIAM VON GRUMBACH

What wilt thou here, why comest to me? Shall I pay penalty for thee? Wilt thou drive that bloodhound, the Steward. into full pursuit of me? They have already reviled me enow, as if I too were on the other side. But I never was. I was never under the black banner.

GEYER

William, 'tis but an hour of sleep I want. Then I will away and never again appear before thine eyes. But now I am powerless, a child can fell me.

WILLIAM VON GRUMBACH

I cannot house nor harbour thee, my life is at stake.

GEYER

Then if I must go, wilt thou not follow German custom and tell me of another shelter?

WILLIAM VON GRUMBACH

I know no other, I know thee not. Who bade thee begin the war? Now is death closer to thee than life.

GEYER

A monk in a cloister outlasteth many a man of war. Fare thee well.—Wert thou not an evangelical?

WILLIAM VON GRUMBACH

A Lutheran I was, but not of Karlstadt's party, still less of Münzer's. So I now hold fast to God's word, even as Luther holds fast to it.

GEYER

Crumbs and fragments will he carry away with him.

WILLIAM VON GRUMBACH

Whither wilt thou?

GEYER

O beloved Germans! Thanks is not to be achieved of the German folk. Farewell.

WILLIAM VON GRUMBACH

Canst thou tell evil of me, have I ever sided with the peasants?

GEYER

God knoweth what I can and what I cannot. Four days I have had no rest. I have warred against the Leaguers until all my limbs grew numb. We held the fort in the little castle at Ingolstadt, until our powder was gone; then we defended us with hands and teeth. All that were left crept into a cellar and barricaded that. Then

they threw powder into the murder-mine and ignited it. William, if the hangman stretches me on the rack now, I cannot answer for my own face.

WILLIAM VON GRUMBACH

[*With sudden resolve.*] Come, go in yonder. If I can endure dog and cat, then I can endure thee for a night; but be off with the earliest light. [GEYER *hesitates before going off through a door opened to him at the left.*] Od, wilt thou not?

GEYER

[*Significantly.*] I lie and sleep in utter peace, for thou alone, O Lord . . .

[*Exit with* MOLLY *and* GRUMBACH.

ANNA VON GRUMBACH

[*Enters hastily.*] William!

WILLIAM VON GRUMBACH

[*Returns.*] Callest thou to me?

ANNA VON GRUMBACH

What dost thou in there?

WILLIAM VON GRUMBACH

Nothing.

ANNA VON GRUMBACH

The maids saw a man in black armour climbing the winding stair.

William von Grumbach

Well, and then? Are there not more than enough armoured men in the castle?

Anna von Grumbach

Hast thou observed naught?

William von Grumbach

[*Vehemently.*] My word, no!

Anna von Grumbach

[*Frightened and foreboding.*] William!

William von Grumbach

What wilt thou of me?

Anna von Grumbach

Thou hast seen the knight?

William von Grumbach

In the Devil's name, yes, I have seen the knight! Now hold thy tongue and leave me in peace.

Anna von Grumbach

Thou knowest who the knight is.

William von Grumbach

I know not, I know him not.

Anna von Grumbach

[*Almost weeping.*] In the name of God and all the saints, hide him not.

WILLIAM VON GRUMBACH

Shall I heap blood-guilt upon me?

ANNA VON GRUMBACH

Let his blood fall upon me, William. Think of thy wife and child. Thou art in the Bishop's way. . . .

WILLIAM VON GRUMBACH

[*As the knights are on the point of entering, thrusts his wife away.*] Hell and the Devil!

SCHERTLIN

[*Without armour, appears in the doorway to the right, holding* GRUMBACH'S *three-year-old boy on his arm.*] Hi-diddy, hi-diddy, whoop! Hallo! [*Carrying him into the room.*]

Wilt earn an honest living,
Thou noble young and fine,
Take the advice I'm giving:
To horse, fall into line.
When the peasant to wood doth ride,
Attack him boldly then,
Just catch him by the collar,
Rejoice that heart of thine,
Take from him every thaler,
Unhitch his horses fine,
Be brisk and keep thy courage up.
And hath he nought for thee to steal,
Then split his head in twain.

When I passed by his room, your ladyship, he was making a murderous noise, shrieking for his

mother. I went into the room and all was well. But I couldn't leave again, had to take him with me. Well, my word.—What eyes the little squire maketh. Od's heartlings, look about thee. I too have a son such as thou art. Won three silk jerkins for me while yet in the womb. They wagered with me it would be a daughter.

[Anna von Grumbach *takes the half-naked baby and withdraws quickly with it.*

Kunz von der Mühlen

[*Has entered with* Hartheim, Kastell, *and* Hutten.] Gentlemen, here are the dice.

Schertlin

Without boasting, Squire, you will do well an you do not have at me with the dice. Not two days ago I took fifty florins from the Steward at camp.

Wolf von Kastell

But thirty thereof I harvested myself the next day.

Schertlin

Od's zookers! I had no joy of the play, being right hungry and impatient, else you had not been able to win a single silver penny of me. [*To* Hutten.] Sir Knight, I drink your health.

[*He drinks.*

Wolf von Kastell

He is very tired and full, and will scarce re-

spond. And you, Squire von Hartheim, the wine hath also risen sadly to your head, meseemeth,

HARTHEIM

Twenty florins, an you do not go under the table sooner than I.

SCHERTLIN

A wager! Fight it out, fight it out!

WOLF VON KASTELL

I will drink with you as oft as you will.

SCHERTLIN

Fight it out, fight it out!

[SCHERTLIN, HARTHEIM, KASTELL, VON DER MÜHLEN, *and* GRUMBACH *return to the banquet hall.* HUTTEN *has gone to sleep, his head laid down on the table.*

ANNA VON GRUMBACH

[*Enters and steps up to* HUTTEN.] Laurence, Laurence! [LAURENCE VON HUTTEN *grunts.*] Laurence, Laurence! Florian Geyer is here!

LAURENCE VON HUTTEN

[*Starts up.*] Who? Where? Florian Geyer?

ANNA VON GRUMBACH

Aye, Laurence.

LAURENCE VON HUTTEN

Now all of a sudden?

ANNA VON GRUMBACH

He is fleeing, Laurence, and just came in.

LAURENCE VON HUTTEN

Where? I will lay him low, I alone will lay him low.

ANNA VON GRUMBACH

Calm thee, for God's sake, hush, hush!

[WILLIAM VON GRUMBACH *enters.*

LAURENCE VON HUTTEN

William, where is he?

WILLIAM VON GRUMBACH

Who?

LAURENCE VON HUTTEN

Geyer.

WILLIAM VON GRUMBACH

What, dost thou ask me again?

LAURENCE VON HUTTEN

William, speak or I will cry the alarm. Down with Geyer! He hath had French pay and would have made the Duke and hangman of Württemberg into an emperor. He hath served my mortal foe, he must die!

HARTHEIM

[*Enters.*] What is it, gentlemen?

WILLIAM VON GRUMBACH

Florian Geyer is in the house.

HARTHEIM

Geyer? Weapons! [*He rushes out.*

SCHERTLIN

[*Enters.*] Geyer is here?

WILLIAM VON GRUMBACH

Gentlemen, listen to reason; consider who he is; moderate yourselves. I cannot house nor harbour him, I cannot shield him, nor will I; so see to it that he do not escape you.

SCHERTLIN

Guard the exits! Weapons! Men!
[*He rushes out. Great confusion.*

HARTHEIM

[*Returning.*] Where is my helmet?

SCHERTLIN

[*Armed only in part, confused, half sober, re-enters.*] The men! The men!

HARTHEIM

The men are dead and blind drunk, lying on their backs and snoring.

SCHERTLIN

Sound the alarm!

ANNA VON GRUMBACH

Sound no alarm, Sir Knight!

LAURENCE VON HUTTEN

[*Partially armed, returns.*] Where is Geyer now? I am ready.

[HANS *the* SHEPHERD *appears at the stairway door.*

SCHERTLIN

[*To* HANS.] Drunken rabble, will ye awake?

[WILLIAM VON GRUMBACH *has stolen away.*

LAURENCE VON HUTTEN

William, where art thou?

SCHERTLIN

Where is the squire?

KUNZ VON DER MÜHLEN

Where is Geyer?

[ANNA VON GRUMBACH *commands silence by a gesture, goes to the door through which* GEYER *went out, and points to it with her hand, then she disappears. The half-drunk knights grip their swords tightly and approach the door cautiously. Silence. Suspense. Then the door opens; whispers among the knights.* MOLLY *comes out and retires again. In*

the next moment she comes into the clear; in the middle of the room she is seized and stabbed.

MOLLY

[*Dying.*] Captain! Help! Mordio! Murder!

SCHERTLIN

Now no hesitation, seize your weapons tightly.

[LAURENCE VON HUTTEN *steals quite close to the door and is just about to lay his hand on the latch when the door is violently kicked open from within. With the stump of the black banner in his left and his naked sword in his right hand,* GEYER *stands in the doorway. All tumble back. Proud, cold, and menacing is his glance, as he speaks with icy calm.*

GEYER

Whom seek ye? [*The knights are silent.*] Whom seek ye?

SCHERTLIN

Florian Geyer of Giebelstatt.

GEYER

[*Advancing.*] I am he, who are ye?

SCHERTLIN

Knowest thou me not?

GEYER

No.

SCHERTLIN

Knowest thou not Sebastian Schertlin, from the days at Pavia?

GEYER

Should I remember every brawler and cheat that runs in Frondsberg's mob?

LAURENCE VON HUTTEN

Knowest thou not me neither?

GEYER

Thou art the slave of priests.

LAURENCE VON HUTTEN

Laurence von Hutten is my name.

GEYER

Then be ashamed to look the Devil in the eye, an thou hast one honest German vein in thy body.

LAURENCE VON HUTTEN

By God's martyrdom! Dost thou boast of being the friend of Ulrich von Hutten, and servest the Duke and hangman of Württemberg, his worst enemy?

GEYER

Naught without cause, as Sickingen said in dying.

HARTHEIM

In short, why talk much to no purpose? Yield to our mercy. [GEYER *laughs in unspeakable contempt.*] Yield to our mercy. Yield voluntarily, Sir Knight, else—

GEYER

Hey! Thou with thy tread of Spanish peacock, come not near me! Thinkest thou I am not man enough to defend myself, that thou threatenest me with death like a fatted goose?

WOLF VON KASTELL

Thou canst not war against the wrath of God.

SCHERTLIN

Yield to our mercy. You were the head and leader of this peasant revolt. You misled the poor folk into disgrace, distress, destruction.

[GEYER *laughs.*

WOLF VON KASTELL

You set yourself against law, order, justice, and the word of God.

[GEYER. *his back protected by the wall, laughs again.*

SCHERTLIN

For the last time, Sir Knight, yield to our mercy. Put away your sword.

GEYER

[*In battle position, terrible.*] Come on!

LAURENCE VON HUTTEN

At him!

SCHERTLIN

Halt!

[*The knights confer softly; meanwhile* HANS THE SHEPHERD, *standing in the background, has raised his crossbow and repeatedly aimed at* GEYER.

GEYER

[*Buried in thought, suddenly shouts loudly and with superhuman voice.*] Judas! Judas!—

LAURENCE VON HUTTEN

Dost thou now shout like a bellowing ox? Thou art Judas, no other than thou. Hast thou not turned Judas to the common nobility? Thy mother weepeth her eyes out, thy father goeth to his grave for sorrow. . . .

GEYER

[*Absently.*] I am the last of my race and line.

WOLF VON KASTELL

What saith he? God forbid, there are enough knights and cavaliers of thy name left alive.

SCHERTLIN

In the name of the Steward of Waldburg, Governor of Württemberg . . .

LAURENCE VON HUTTEN

In the name of the supreme field-general . . .

GEYER

I hold him to be a butcher, knacker, pander, and rogue, and you to be knacker's hounds, marrow-suckers, envy-bitten, hose-wetting pups. . . .

KNIGHTS

Death to him, death to him!

GEYER

Come on, come on!

LAURENCE VON HUTTEN

Peasant, give peace!

GEYER

Ziska [1] and freedom! Come on!

[HANS THE SHEPHERD *looses his bolt at* GEYER. GEYER *is mortally wounded. He falls forward, rigid, straight, his eyes full of hatred, and breathes no more.*

[1] Ziska von Trocnow (John Zizka), Bohemian general and Hussite leader, 1376–1424.

Laurence von Hutten

[*Startled and shocked, like the other knights.*] Zounds, what was that?

Schertlin

Upon my oath, gentlemen . . .

Wolf von Kastell

Not too close, Squire.

[Hans the Shepherd *dashes at the dead body as at a slain animal.*

Hartheim

Is he dead?

Hans the Shepherd

Without a doubt. I never aimed better shot.

Schertlin

Thou hast felled him, bloodhound.

Hans the Shepherd

[*Unbuckling* Geyer's *breast-armour.*] Should I not? Hath not the Steward set a hundred florins on his head?

Kunz von der Mühlen

[*Shouting through the window.*] Florian Geyer is dead! Blow your trumpets! Florian Geyer is dead!

Wolf von Kastell

Out with the steeds! Up and let us bring the joyous news to the camp.

LAURENCE VON HUTTEN

Leave me the sword, Brother Jack, and thy money shall not fail thee. I will speak to the Steward for thee. [*He takes the sword.*

SCHERTLIN

As God is my aid, a glorious weapon.

WOLF VON KASTELL

[*Also looking at the sword.*] There is a legend graven on the hilt.

LAURENCE VON HUTTEN

[*Reads it.*] *"Nulla crux, nulla corona."* [1]

KUNZ VON DER MÜHLEN

[*At the window, calling.*] Huzza! Florian Geyer is dead. [*Fanfares in the court below.*

THE CURTAIN FALLS

[1] No cross, no crown.

VELAND

A TRAGEDY

"The idea of the gods is necessary to art. Every idea is the universal in the form of the particular."—F. W. VON SCHELLING. (*The Philosophy of Art.*)

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

King Harald.
Bödwild, *his daughter.*
Ai, Ingi } *his sons.*
Jarl Gunnar.
Atli, *a Hunter.*
Bui, Boddi } *Sea-Watchers.*
Veland.
Ketill, *a Shepherd.*
King Harald's Men.

THE FIRST ACT

The Sheep Island. A flat wilderness with sparse grasses. Amongst rocks the entry to Veland's *workshop, which is underground. First and second sea-watchers,* Bui *and* Boddi, *heavily armed, pacing slowly on the beach.*

Bui

O comfortless, unbearable service this
that the king Harald forces on us, ever
to pace the coast of this waste island.

Boddi

He
but punishes us. It's true, I do not know
what we have done to earn it, and so lose
his favour; yet we are exiled, that is clear.

Bui

Yes, though it's said that we're appointed
to guard this Veland. this wild beast, that scarcely
is like a human being from a distance—
we are the prisoners ourselves.

Boddi

Yet on all sides
they think that we should feel deep gratitude,
for, so they say, the cleverest, the bravest,
is hardly good enough to guard this monster.

And so a load of honour is heaped on us,
seeing that we are chosen as his guardians.
Truly there is no burden I know of
that I would sink so gladly in the sea.

Bui

Brother, thou speak'st my heart. Or else
let Harald lay on someone else's head
this load of honour.

Boddi

If I were the king
I'd kill this Veland, spawn of darkness. True,
I am a soldier and—God knows it—fear
has never touched me in the battle's tumult,
yet every time I see that pallid fiend,
that lamed obscenity, that fearful smith,
it runs in icy currents down my back.
Yes, even the moment I draw near his cave.
It's said, moreover, that he hates our king,
and only suffers further life to wreak
revenge on those who have so fearfully
maimed him. But who did that?

Bui

King Harald,

who else?

Boddi

Where did it happen, then, and how?
If thou know'st, tell me.

Bui

It was in Wolfstal.
In harvest with great number of his men

King Harald set out thither. Many days
they rode ere they were at the mountain foot
wherein it lies. And many days they climbed
upward before they reached the valley. Seldom
had man's foot trod the rock-bound, lonely place,
and besides Atli, who led Harald's horse,
only the bear and eagle knew the way
thither. And, men say, evil spirits.
Midway in
the valley lay a little lake, unmoved
eternally. The tarn is bottomless!
And on the shore we found this Veland's cave,
towered high, like this one here. Smoke rose
out of its roof.

Boddi

So thou wert there,
on that foray?

Bui

And never will forget it.

Boddi

Did Veland mark you come? The lynx's ear
hears not such distant noises as his does,
and no hound's scent was ever so fine as his.
His eyes see far as eagles'.

Bui

Certainly
he would have given us trouble, had he been
at home then, for his strength is like a giant's.
But a forsaken fire glowed on the hearth,
sending through the chimney a wisp of smoke.
The house was empty. We went unhindered in.

Father in Heaven, what riches glittered there
before the Jarl's eyes! From blackened ceilings
hung,
stringed on bast fibre, hoard of golden rings:
arm-ring and foot-ring, magic ring and seal ring;
in weight immense, and for twelve horses' backs
too heavy. Such a weight of gold since then
I have not seen. Forgotten in a moment
was the hunt straightway. What was now to us
cave-dwelling bear or any other quarry
beside the golden—the enchanting booty
that without quest or battle lay congealed there,
and every hand involuntarily
allured to plunder? Only Jarl Harald,
scarce noticing our madness, in harsh tones
forbade all seizure of the smith's strange hoard,
and thus he spoke: The smith is worth far more
than hundred times his treasure's worth; then him,
and not the gold, which goes from hand to hand,
you shall seize for me, and to eternal serfdom
conduct him. Then take what he's gathered here,
and share it by fair bargaining among you.
And so it happened. We lurked long in ambush
till Veland came at last. Then many hesitated
when they saw him, and saw the quarry, the bear,
that scarcely seemed to bow his massive shoulders,
so unrestrained his step. For at that time
he still stood upright, and was not as now
shrivelled and mangled by King Harald's cunning.

Boddi

Was it done then? Did they cut through the
sinews
at his left ankle and his right knee then?

Bui

We bound him when tired out by the hunt he lay
snoring in deep impenetrable slumber.
And only on this islet, when his fetters
were taken off, so that he might pursue
his art, and be of use, they lamed his foot.

Boddi

His lot is bitter. And to me it's bitter
to guard as shameful captive one who once
was free, and through captivity's grown a beast.
But look, here comes King Harald's hunter, Atli.
Who could have forced his boat through the frozen
sound?
The message must be urgent that he brings us.

Atli

[*Has approached with hurried steps.*
Hallo, you men! Is that you there at last?
Are you the sea-watchers I seek, or only
shadows again, that vanish in the mist?

Bui

We are the watchers, Bui and Boddi. Fear not.

Boddi

Who meets with Bui and Boddi need not fear.
But what are you hunting, Atli, on this islet?
For there is neither bear nor wild boar here.
Here dwell but sea-birds, and you never were
a man that deigned to catch mere birds or fishes.

Atli

No matter how much I would like to catch them,
fish or bird or other tamest quarry,
I must haste panting on another scent
that the high bailiff and his followers
have tracked for days already—all in vain!
Ai and Ingi have disappeared, my friends.

Bui

The king's sons, Ai and Ingi, thou mean'st them?

Boddi

Thou mean'st the shoots from Harald Harfagar's tree,
making the royal trunk so green and verdant,
the apple of Alrun's eye, Alrun our queen?

Atli

Yes, Boddi, I speak of them.
And after them have we, the king himself,
the king's men, serf and maid, searched all the land
by every path, rode far and wide for days,
searched pass and mountain, field and forest through.
The net has sought them on the ocean floor
and deep in beds of rivers and of lakes.

Bui

If such a blow strikes Harald Harfagar
then is the highest fortune only for
the gods, who cradle us in traitorous bliss,
that we may sink more surely 'neath their hate.

Boddi

If there is anything gives faintest hope
they may be found and still are living—speak.

Atli

Another something every moment. The Jarl
leaps from his seat each moment in new haste
and rages at us: Go here, or go there.
Ai loved this place, and Ingi loved that.
A fisher saw the king's sons fishing here,
a hunter saw them setting snares, and so forth.
The queen is calm, the Jarl is ever restless;
he cannot think their loss inalterable.
So he has sent me to the islet now
to ask for them. I ask, ask without hope.

Bui

How could young Ai and Ingi come to Veland's
isle,
too arduous a journey for mere boys?
And then there's the impenetrable ring
of vigilant watchers whom naught can escape
that nears the coast line. Never has a foot
of either of the king's sons touched this shore.

Atli

I know it; yes, I know thou say'st the truth.
Even if I found the children's bodies washed
on the sand here, and brought them to the king,
even this would far surpass my widest hope.
For with his dead sons I would bring him rest.
But as it is, uncertainty consumes him
and drinks his blood like an otter, which with teeth
fixed in his bosom, will not let him go.

Bui

Whence comes the smoke, that rises over there?

Boddi

From Veland's smithy. Hear'st thou not his hammering?

Bui

Boddi, a thought has come into my mind.
Listen, why have they not sought counsel here,
with Veland? It is said he understands
much else beside the art of smelting gold
and iron; once I heard a beldame say of him
he knew of hidden things, what in the earth's bowels
or in the air and sky hovers, or in
oblivion or futurity hides itself.
And it is true, for he foretold me once
my wife's death.

Boddi

Why did not the king himself
remember Veland and implore his aid?
He knows the smith's mysterious power better
than any other.

Bui

Yes. Thou'rt right.
If I were in such need as the Jarl is now,
the man that I should seek out would be Veland.

Atli

If it is as you say, ye sea-watchers,
then I have not come hither all in vain,

so without squandering another moment
in surmise, let's go straightway to the smith.

Bui

It's clear you know not yet the beast you speak of.
Far easier you could ravish from the peasant
his farm and pastures than, against his will,
extort a word from this churl. Only cunning
and patience can do that. He hates discourse,
it always seems to us: his own discourse
and others' speech still more. Only as a mute
he lives year in, year out, and furious,
grinding his teeth, comes out before his door,
when human speech betrays a human near.

Boddi

And if at last a stifled grumble bursts
out of his breast, and you think to discover
something that's like a word, from the bear's growling,
poison and malice trickle out in pain,
holding the meaning still more deeply hidden
than silence.

Bui

He speaks truth, Atli: so is the man.
We must lie still and wait if we would hear,
no matter what it be, from him. So follow me,
for I have known him longest, I have known
his footstep ever since that time in Wolfstal.
We shall lie still and patient here in ambush.

[*They go behind the stone blocks, from whence, unseen, they can overlook the entrance to the cave.*

[*Out of the smithy comes* Veland, *the smith. A powerful monster in human shape. A rusty, red, long, shaggy fell covers almost his whole body. He drags one foot. He clambers to the peak of one of the porphyry blocks and crouches down staring at the overcast sun sinking in the sea, its wan and bloody light irradiating him.*

Veland

Cursed creation, art thou still around me,
impelled by thy hereditary curse's old
unbroken power? Air that tugs my fell,
and fills and nourishes my bosom! Sea,
bond-slave of all the storms, a storm thyself,
and rocks forever hurling crumbled rocks
against Veland's isle, laden with curse and grief!
And thou, thou earth, waste theatre of fury
spread wide in procreation and destruction!
What waits thee, that long since was not accomplished?

Atli

This must be Veland, the wise cunning smith,
and not a savage beast, which from the caves
of the high mountainous rocky wildernesses
fearful goes out for prey? And is this speech,
that seems to strangle in his gorge, as if
a piece of crust were sticking in his throat?

Veland

Alas! Alas! who'll take upon himself
my bloody deed? Why do you drive in on me,
malignant billows, fiery tongued with vengeance,

sending your slaver of foam towards me, pouring on me
a serpent brood, malignant hissing reptiles,
that loathsomely and mischievously mock me?
There! My reply!

[*He lifts a heavy rock and hurls it in the breakers.*

For payment take my bread.

Bui

We are accustomed to the churl's strange acts;
but as he is to-day, he's strange to me.

Boddi

Yet let us try to understand the snarling,
the clamour and howling of the cripple fiend.

Bui

By God, he howls out now: it goes through bone and marrow.

Atli

I am a hunter, fear not bear nor wild ox,
but these cries almost rob me of my senses.
When ever burst such grief and fury from one breast?

Boddi

Grip your spears firm and keep still. If he saw us
it would go badly with us, I'm afraid.

Veland

Murder! And why not murder? What is it that wrenches

this howling from me, sprinkling all the air
with savage lamentation. Laugh!
[*He laughs, loudly and horribly.*
'Tis he
who must create that finds himself compelled
to murder too. Out of murder's travail
flowers the world! The blossom's murder shapes
the ripened fruit. Laugh! For in everything,
who cannot hear the shriek of murder? All that
lives
awaits its murder! Yes, the very stone
on which I crouch impatiently awaits it.—
Down now, thou light, my mother is the night.
Now may she lead King Harald's sons
once more into his dream. But first she'll feed me
with the black milk of ruthless cruelty,
and cover with the impenetrable veil
which hides the sanctuary of my revenge,
me and my work.
[*He hobbles back into the cave.*

Bui

He spoke of Harald's sons. Did you hear, too?

Boddi

Of Ai and Ingi.

Bui

No, he did not name
their names. He called the king's name loudly
out.
But what he said about the sons I know not.

Atli

I too heard something surely about the sons.
Do you intend to go in to him still?

Bui

I do not dare. To-day's his bad day:
now he knows no one, does not know himself
nor others, strikes around, exasperated,
in staring madness.

Atli

Yet in truth the Jarl
has no more valuable servant; now again
hark, hammer-blow is linked to hammer-blow.

Bui

This fearful smith is never wearied out.
But what is that? Sounds not in your ears, too,
a clamour of unaccustomed ringing, clanging?

Boddi

I only hear the breakers roaring on the beach.

Bui

And in the ocean's roar thou hear'st naught more?

Boddi

Yes! now! As if rolled clanging iron in the flood.

Bui

It ceases; it was like spring thunder which
fearful and gracious rolls across the island sea.
Now it falls from the air like sound of strings
struck on a golden harp, as when in hall
Jarl Harald Harfagar's bards sweep the sweet
chords.

Boddi

It's so, by God.

Atli

I have been told of these sounds
tales unbelievable. The story goes:
who hears them once and hears them not again,
consumes himself thenceforth in longing,
as he had sat at the table of the gods
once only, then was flung to outer darkness.

Bui

Atli, thou too hear'st that celestial music.

Boddi

It wells from Veland's smithy, now I hear it,
and fills the air with sunshine, and birdsong,
with verdure, woodland zephyrs, odorous breezes.

Bui

Loud crash the iron cymbals on each other now!

Boddi

What is that shining?

Bui

On the strand a woman rises.

Boddi

No earthly one: a messenger from heaven.

Bui

Veiled in gold from her temples to her feet.

Boddi

It is a goddess, bright with heavenly radiance.

Bui

Gold bangles tinkle on her tender ankles.

Boddi

By God, men, there is only one like her
for heavenly beauty in all Harald's kingdom,
and that is Bödwild, the king's girl herself.
But how comes Bödwild to the isle? Keep still,
a mystery will open now before us.

Bui

She comes, she walks on: what way will she take?

Boddi

Are not the trailing clouds above her lighted
by her bright beauty's lustre, breaking upward?

Bui

Men, look what way she's going! Incredible.
She walks on towards the smithy, she goes in.
The splendour vanishes in the devil's nest.

Atli

I cannot speak, a stone weighs down my heart.
Air! I can't breathe or move! Air! Air! I'm
choking!

Bui

I rub my eyes, as if but now I wakened
out of a deep and many years long slumber.
That ever the king's child trod Veland's islet
I had denied on oath before the Jarl.
Yet now she climbs, as by a well-known path,
straightway into the monster's infamous den.

This must be some malicious, crooked wile,
some juggling magic of this shaggy fiend,
who truly is master of all evil charms.

Boddi

This may cost us our heads, hast thou considered, Bui?
Already the sharp sword cuts through my neck,
for that was Bödwild truly; you can see
still in the sand the marks where pressed her feet.

Atli

Let us to boat, men, and straight to the Jarl,
for it is clear the smith draws Bödwild here
with hellish arts. And what the father of all evil does,
truly he does not with a fair intention.

Bui

Good, Atli! But delay a moment more:
first, since as three we are a better guard
for this first jewel in King Harald's crown—
who knows it may not even now be needed!—
and then, because in patient ambush
we may learn more, and more important, things.
See, she comes out the smithy door again.
Hush! When she speaks let us not miss a word.

[Bödwild *comes out of the smithy again. She speaks back into the house.*

Bödwild

Slave, there are knouts to clothe thy loathsome body
with weals. Beware! Rather than let

thy servile hand come near me I would take
the centipede to bed, thou snouted monster.

[Veland *too comes hobbling out of the smithy.*

Veland

And yet my golden clasps grip in thy hair
that never yet a lover's hand has touched,
and fetters made of gold and ivory,
my fingers' work, with golden force constrain
thy ankles; and through these my fingers stroke
thee.
And what say'st thou then to my serpent ring,
that in the fair flesh of thy arm is bitten,
fast burrowed in and close knit up with it?

Bödwild

Misshapen, crazy monster, hound of hell,
were gold not gold, nor clear and purified
through the fire's power and there refined from
dross,
then I would strip in horror from my flesh
these trinkets; so thy lewd and impudent words
disgust me. Filthy cripple, do the gods
hate thee so, that they force thee to besoil
the only pure thing that remains in thee,
the works of thy industrious art?

Veland

Thou meanest,
he still must be a eunuch who possesses
the art and the desire to shape desire?
Thou'rt wrong; the desert's ardour shaped the
field.
The master's ardour, that alone, can smelt

the red gold, kneading it to lovely shapes.
Not only the ardour of love, but that of hate.

Bödwild

If thou canst not make other rings and clasps,
then call on hate for all I care.
If ardour must be, give me hatred's ardour.
But only fill my chambers full with jewels.

Veland

Jewels enough I've forged for thee already,
trinkets enough, that only lend thy body
the worth it has; and a new longing grips me,
an overwhelming longing: to cast forth
into a woman's womb the seed of fury,
and to beget a god in vengeance, from the blood
of my worst enemy, like to myself
condemned to pain, to shameful degradation,
and then to everlasting grief.
This work alone is what life gives me now.

Bödwild

Although I cannot understand these words,
one thing is sure: their hidden sense is evil.
For that thou half-deservest chastisement.
But that, repulsive worm, neither my eye,
nor ear, nor hand, might be insulted further
by thee, I go now, never to return.

Veland

Thou errest: thou wilt evermore return to me,
like the she-bear, drawn by the honeycomb.
So didst thou find the way to Veland's islet,
and camest here unasked, uncalled, to me.

Have I, perchance, moved from my island yet,
arrogant fool, that I might have thee near?

Bödwild

No, for the king's gold-spotted mastiffs then
would tear thy flesh before the palace gate.
Yet truly I must curse the day whereon
I yielded to my childish girlish longing
and reached this place at last, and fell beneath
malignant magic of thy hellish arts.

Veland

Thou hast fallen under it indeed, poor child,
for still thou hast not seen a tenth part even
of that my sooty dwelling hides below there:
great chambers full of jasper, jade and diamonds,
and countless horseloads of the rich bar-gold.

Bödwild

The treasure is my father's, and not thine,
slave! And I can exact that thou hide nothing.
What is my lord and father's is mine too.

Veland

Yet now I hide even from thy father himself,
the king—may every curse of darkness strike
him!—
jewels for which his soul is howling,
which he must seek in anguish and despair.

Bödwild

How? Since the new moon I've not seen my
father.

VELAND

If thou shouldst see him, ask for Ai and Ingi.
Truly the hour of reckoning is not far.

BÖDWILD

These are but impotent, long familiar phrases,
such as thy brutish brain bears ever again,
and Harald Harfagar, his majesty, my father,
serenely smiling looks down on thy snarling.

VELAND

Perchance thou wilt not speak thus,
if thou'lt but turn thy glance the other way.
See, is not that a dragon ship that lands there,
at the cliff's foot, carrying the royal castle
as crown upon its verdant prow? Does it not seem
as if perplexed impatience bent the masts,
with clumsy anguished hands clutched fast the helm,
sending the keel zigzagging here? The sail
blown wildly, flaps around the masts; without
a leader seems this band, though at its head
it bears Jarl Harald Harfagar's pennon there.

BUI

The king himself's come to the isle, the king!

BODDI

By God, with all his men he's come himself.

ATLI

To the landing place, ye watchers. Great must be

the need within the Jarl's troubled breast,
since he's resigned to come this proscribed way.

Boddi

Or else the princes have been found, and grief
is changed to gladness, and this is a journey
of thanksgiving for the granted joy. Let's go!

[Bui, Boddi, *and* Atli *rush away.* Veland *stands disconcerted when he hears them speaking without concealment, and sees them come out of their hiding place and run away.*

Veland

It's known, the fires of love make even a cock
both deaf and blind. And so the hunter uses
the pairing time to make sure of his prey.
So now; Bui and Boddi have surprised us
and what they've seen and heard they'll tell the Jarl
as soon as he sets foot upon the beach,
and thy proscribed connection will no longer
remain a secret. But what's to be done?
The new veto will be the old one over again.
Thou wilt o'erstep it as thou didst the old.

Bödwild

I'll die of shame if the king sees me here.

Veland

Then go into my smithy and hide thee there.

Bödwild

If I took to a boat I could not pass the band.

VELAND

Thou art secure inside my workshop; no one
would trust himself in that white-heated furnace.
And I'll deny thy presence steadfastly,
against the word of Atli, Bui, and Boddi.

BÖDWILD

Why dost thou look to-day so spiteful, hound of
hell,
and why did sudden shuddering seize me
when I set foot across thy threshold now?
Once more the shuddering grips me, doubly strong,
now that again I must invade thy kingdom.
No, I shall walk out in the open gaze
of my dear father, and will tell him all.

VELAND

Do it, but be prepared to bow thy neck,
thy arrogant neck, down in the dust before
the face of all King Harald's followers.

BÖDWILD

Hide me, smith, hide me here! I cannot bear it!

[BÖDWILD *goes into the smithy.* VELAND *bolts the door behind her. Afterwards, his lowering gaze ever fixed on the distance, he holds himself like a chained dog, who eyes some quarry which unaware approaches him.*

VELAND

O festival, O festival, at last
to my sad keep of pain and servitude

Harald draws near! Approach, thou welcome one!
Nay, do not hesitate, great ruler, Jarl,
Jarl Harald Harfagar, the fragrant-locked.
The final deed is ready, and the loveliest,
on which in secret my first hammer-blows
worked, since I've worked here, sealed by my first curse.
Since then ten years have fleeted by.—Torches!
The fiery ball of the sun has dived below,
shuddering before my labour, which this night
must veil. Flee, then, thou coward god,
thy light's not needed here, and without thee
or his own torches. he who comes shall view
the aureole glittering, and be blinded in the radiance.
Patience. Now, Veland, curb thy stormy blood
or thy green joy will burst thy maddened veins.
How exquisitely burn my ancient wounds!
Now first the gruesome cut divides my sinews
that turned me into cripple, devil, slave.
Patience. And hold thy passion's poison fast
within thy heart, in silence sweating malice,
as is thy custom, for so only canst thou
feed with slow torture on him, in like way
as he has fed on thee. Yea, thou canst feast,
feast on thy work of vengeance.

[King Harald Harfagar *enters at the head of a large band of followers, among these* Jarl Gunnar, *commander-in-chief,* Bjarni, *pilot, and* Atli, Bui, *and* Boddi.

Harald

Is that thou, Veland, crouching on a stone
as thou wert one with it, and only stone?

VELAND

I am he.

HARALD

Thou meanest that thou art a stone, or Veland too?

VELAND

For answer I would like to set thee a riddle.

HARALD

Do so; but afterwards
give me the answer to a riddle too,
on whose account I've sought thee out to-day.
For, men say, thou hast knowledge of magic runes,
and see'st what's hidden, both in past and future.

VELAND

Thou err'st, O King. Else should calamity
have crept on me in malice, as it did?
I am an uncouth slave with shaggy breast and fist;
and should I learn first in thy service, maybe,
seership and knowledge, where in drudgery
both day and night the sweat runs from my flesh,
and scarcely I've time left to still my raging thirst,
or agony of the unhealed wounds thou gav'st me?

HARALD

I did thee wrong once, Veland, speak no more
of that. He only feels another's pain

who feels pain in himself. O, I was young
and cruelly thoughtless when I captured thee.
But then the gods granted me all, yes, ere
I asked, as if I were a pampered child.
And so I laid my hands on all that pleased me.
Yea, the whole world and all that was therein
seemed to me then like my ancestral kingdom.
Now flies a black, gigantic bird, broad-pinioned
and croaking, o'er my roof-top, and since then
its gloomy shadow never fades from me.
O Veland, now I know what misery is!

VELAND

Though thou hast reached this smithy door at last,
believe me, thou'rt still but a raw apprentice.
And what thou think'st to know, poor Jarl, just
now,
of the house of slavery, fire-begotten serfdom—
when thou art master, thou wilt laugh at that!

HARALD

Yet faithfully I give thee my king's word:
Unending wealth I owe thy art already;
but if thou canst succeed to end my anguish
this time, and lift my bitter sorrow, friend,
thou shalt go free from here, not only unhurt,
but richly paid, wherever thou may'st please.

VELAND

And how would I enjoy my liberty?
Wilt thou knit up the sinews that are cut
for me again, so that as in old times
with hunter's ardour I may overtake
the deer on winged feet?

HARALD

Tell me where my sons Ai and Ingi are!
They say thy soul has seership: this amends
I'll make thee for my ancient wrong to thee.
Yes, if thou lead'st them back into my arms,
the sweet boys, smith, the pride of my late years,
mine and their mother's greatest earthly joy,
then I'll give thee a land in fief, a kingdom!

VELAND

Hast thou made me a guardian of thy house?
How can I know who robbed thee of the princes?
Or hast thou made me teacher to thy sons,
entrusting their welfare into my hands?
Or dost thou mean that I can emulate
a hound in scent, that no prey can escape?
Bloodhounds, protectors, guards thou hast enough,
enough the idle folk that on the country's sweat
batten and sponge at thy court and thy table,
which under the load of provender almost sinks;
food for those sluggards and those ne'er-do-wells.

GUNNAR

Jarl, shall I strike his ears with the flat of my
sword,
in payment for this shameless, venomous speech?

VELAND

Try it, if thou art weary of life: it's true,
thou hast won many victories for the king,
yet thou remainest one, whom my mere glance
would fell like a bullock, struck down by the axe.

GUNNAR

Now, I will stand this glance, and this same axe
I will adventure, but on thy own head.

HARALD

Peace, Gunnar, he's my foe who angers him,
my sons' foe too, whose rescue he may bar.
Veland, I'll keep true to my word with thee.

GUNNAR

I can't believe that in this monster's head
aught can be spawned excepting hate and darkness.
In this brute's seership I cannot believe.

VELAND

O were I blind! I see, I see, believe it!

HARALD

Thou seest, I believe thou seest! Speak, then!
Reveal where my lost sons are now!
Show my poor boys to me, say where they are.

VELAND

I do not know.

HARALD

Thou knowest.

VELAND

Who will force me
to tell it to anybody if I know?

ALL TOGETHER

The stake, the torture chamber, if thou'rt stubborn!

VELAND

King Harald has accustomed me for long
to both. The torturer is not yet born
can force a word from me if I want to keep
silence.
But you talk foolishly; to-day, it seems to me,
the Jarl, not I, lies stretched upon the rack
in fetters. And if I read right his meaning,
it's I who can make his pain more or less.

HARALD

Veland, have pity! Thou art right, it lies
with thee to keep me on the rack
in agony and uncertainty. If thou,
like us, know nothing, then so let it be,
but if thou know'st, be noble, do not lengthen
an anguish-hearted father's pain, who weeps
in bitter sorrow for his children gone,
who, even now—O horror!—may perchance
be crying out for help in their last need.
If thou'rt a brute to-day, yet wert thou once a
man,
and felt thy manhood: then remember it.

VELAND

I was a man once: say, now, when was that?
And, if I was, why could I not remain one?

HARALD

Because thou killed'st my game upon my hills,
didst steal the gold from out my rivers,
and didst refuse to pay just tribute to me:
therefore befell what thou complainest of.

VELAND

That thou hast changed to a beast what was a man.
Yet I was still more than a man, O Jarl,
and fate had long assailed the demi-god
ere it took thee as help at last, O man!
For only men show capability
for such a knavish deed as thou didst on me.

HARALD

Thou talkest, Veland, while the time goes by
in which perhaps the mischief can be turned
that threatens my boys' golden, curly locks.

VELAND

Thou must have patience now, for in my head
the old obstinacy dwells unbroken still.
And thou hast taught me patience, too, so well,
that I am competent now to teach it thee.

HARALD

Thou chafest ever at thy fetters, gnashest ever,
full of impatient rage, against my law.

VELAND

Yet have I curbed myself, else were I dead.

HARALD

It is but licence that thou longest for,
but I would bring two children aid, who call
even now for it perhaps in direst need.
Monster, say what thou knowest!

Veland

When thou began'st to teach me patience, Jarl,
my love of freedom made me a bad pupil.
Yea, full of fury and impotence is the freeman,
and full of shame when shamefully he lies
in fetters.—But I will not speak to thee
about the mutilation that befell
my body sprung from gods, and to a worm
crawling in slime degraded me! Yet then
I sought, yes then I sought, as thou to-day,
after my child, who was my wife as well,
Hervar the White, the daughter of King Hödver,
the winged one, flown from me towards the south.
And, Jarl, I was already on her track,
as thou to-day art on thy flown sons' track,
and therefore was thy claim for patience then
doubly as bitter as mine is on thee.

Harald

Know'st thou where my sons are? Say only this.

Veland

Canst thou tell me where Hervar is, O Jarl?

Atli

Dog, if thou hast besoiled a freeman's daughter
with the rank ordure of thy flesh,
or sullied her with thy hot doggish lust,
what hast thou earned but to be coupled with
a mangy she-wolf openly, and scourged
to death, libidinous dog, with dirty thongs?

Veland

True, Atli, in one thing if not in all

thou speakest truth; marriage stands near my mind.

HARALD

If thou think'st to receive us with disdain,
look to thyself. And if thou angerest me,
remember always that I am the same
who once did overcome thee in Wolfstal.

VELAND

But I am overcome no longer, Jarl.

HARALD

We are accustomed to mad words from thee.
What does it matter to the master whether
the ox under the yoke should think itself
free or not free? What matters it to me?

VELAND

My thanks, that thou art altogether again
what thou wert once of old. Strike now again
even with such blows as these,
which for long years have been my bread and wages.
Yes, I must hear them, feel them! Strike now, strike!
For only so, not otherwise, thou forgest
the lightnings of revenge, that crash below,
inexorable, destructive. But why is it
once more my wedding makes thee leap to harness?
Yet, spite of that, a supplicant,
even now thou tryest to take me with most humble
and beggarly petitions.

GUNNAR

Now, enough!
I'll hold my hand no longer, if thou let'st
the dog yelp one word more.

HARALD

Veland!
Veland! but tell me where my children are.
Thou canst, for thou art master of all arts.
And givest thou me my dear-loved sons again,
if thy power goes so far, farewell to Veland's isle!
My oath, I'll gladly share my lands and throne with thee!

VELAND

What's mine wouldst thou share with me, Harald, Jarl?
Am I not he who built thy power for thee?
Am I not he who fashioned sword and plough for thee,
thy crown too, and the pillars of thy throne?
Did I not lift the ore from the earth's bowels
wherewith thou armed thy warriors, armoured thy house
with heavy gates through which no force can break?
Who built thy hall and made thy furnishings,
even to the cup, daily refreshing thee?
Who made the dwellings of thy swarming people
and taught the ignorant to waken fruit
from the deep ground? I, I, who know such magic runes!
Yea, I am he who has filled full to bursting

thy spacious granaries with golden harvests.
Yet ever thou giv'st back the half to me,
and so thou art awakened half to wisdom.
And that half now with thy half part of wisdom
I'll take and test to see their worth in gold.
Jarl, if I gain thy wish, thou in return
must give me even what thou didst promise me.
Give me Bödwild, thy daughter. for my bed!

[*The men raise a cry of fury, and feel for their weapons.*

Harald

What did he say? The breakers drowned his words.

Gunnar

What he said, King, your ears must never know.

Veland

Give me Bödwild as bride, and thou annullest
the curse for that which once thou didst to me.
This be my bail that thou hast changed thy ways.
And thou shalt lack no longer thy sons' kisses.

Harald

So be it then. But show me first my children.
I need my bail too that thou speakest the truth.

Veland

Jarl, tell me, have I ever yet betrayed thee?

Harald

Spawn of the night, malice sits in thy blood,
thirst for revenge and evil burn in thy glance.

VELAND

And in thine crouches falsehood lowering,
ready to spring. No, never wilt thou see
thy cherished boys ere in thy royal blood
I quench my passion, and as Bödwild's husband
celebrate here my nuptials.

HARALD

Seize him! Kill him!

[*All rush against* VELAND *with shouts. He springs into the cave, and lets a heavy grated door fall into its clasp.*

GUNNAR

Burst in the door! Break open the door!

HARALD

Back, who cares aught still for his king's command,
or my sons' lives!

VELAND

[*Through the grating.*
Jarl, tell me now thyself,
if I am not conversant with kings' oaths!

[*He recedes laughing into the cave.*

BUI

A mad wolf in his den. Here's iron bars.

BODDI

Of no avail. No human arm can break this door.

GUNNAR

Support the king! He grows pale. He sinks down.

[*A senseless tumult rises.*

ALL

To ship! The king is dying! Help! A doctor!

THE CURTAIN FALLS

THE SECOND ACT

A division in VELAND'S *labyrinthine cave; black, sooty. Several smithy forges, anvils, hammers, pincers, etc. Grated doors to other subterranean chambers. Against the walls several mighty, richly wrought chests. On one of these stands* BÖDWILD. *She tries several pieces of goldsmith's work, and hangs jewels round her neck. Now and then she gazes into a metal hand mirror. Without being observed by her at first,* VELAND *enters through one of the grated doors.*

VELAND

Now it is quiet again outside the door;
the last ship has set out now from the beach.

BÖDWILD

By heaven, I'd half-forgotten, Veland, where I was,
so many are the jewels heaped up here.

VELAND

How much unneeded tumult, where a king goes!
Hast thou not heard arms rattling and men's cries?

BÖDWILD

One could not weary, looking at this hoard,
bathing in it as in a rippling stream,

sinking both arms deep in it, laving them in it.
This is a fountain, but this great chest here
is an endless fountain of bright glittering fountains,
from which this, showering colours, overflows.
O radiance, O fire, that in these caskets
rages, flashing lightnings that the eye can hardly bear.
And all of such great splendour that to suffer
eternal blindness would be but a trifle,
a paltry penance for whoever stole them.

VELAND

King's daughter, thou'lt have leisure now in plenty
to feast thy eyes upon these chests of jewels.

BÖDWILD

That would I do, that will I do: I will
feast my eyes on them until I am full.
Thou'lt not be easily rid of me again,
O smith, and on no count until I lift
my tribute, tenth of this great, golden booty.

VELAND

The best fish come still to the golden hook.

BÖDWILD

What say'st thou?

VELAND

Nothing, save that I'm no niggard:
neither in giving, nor in taking, truly.

Bödwild

[*Passes her hand over her eyes.*
I'm not myself, this multitudinous glittering
sinks subtle magic's falsehoods in my blood.
Holla, malignant ape, say how came I
to be here with thee at this hour?

Veland

When this poor trumpery steals away thy senses,
insolent girl, how wilt thou have to grow
to bear the strength of the still hidden hoard?

Bödwild

I go now, free as I came hither, smith.
It seems to me, a languid incense spreads
around, with which thou art preparing something.

Veland

Truly I am preparing something, thou speak'st truth,
and what I start, I think to finish too.
But if I burn this incense for thee, woman,
it is a fragrant offering, such as men
must offer to the deity of love.
'Tis gold that has bemused thee, it confuses
all in this world that's born of woman's flesh.

Bödwild

[*Beating at one of the doors.*
The door is locked; open to me this moment!

Veland

Thou hast before enquired for tires and girdles
whereby, a goddess like, thou might'st strike down

all the men's hearts, when thou sit'st by thy husband,
robed for thy marriage. Yet thou couldst well do it
without thy jewels, and at the marriage feast
couldst kill the women's radiance with thy own.
Still, tire and girdle too, are finished; I
lied but in mischief, and to see thee angry.

Bödwild

Thou fool and liar, show me then the jewels
and keep me here no longer. How can I
win through the sound in this night's pitchy darkness?

Veland

Believe me, that is but an idle care.

Bödwild

It's a long journey; my boat has no sail;
I came without a boatman, as I've used to.

Veland

Now a night spent on Veland's isle, what's that?
No lack of eider-down, a golden bed, too.

Bödwild

Thou ravest, godforsaken slave, base churl!
Let rather leprosy, white as the swan,
cover my skin, than anyone should dare
to say of me: Once thou didst pass the night
alone with that slave Veland. For through that
I were dishonoured ever. And the heroes
would spit upon me in the royal hall.

VELAND

And yet his majesty thy father offered,
not many moments since, half of a throne,
offered to share with me half of his kingdom.

BÖDWILD

There yelps the madness of a senseless beast.
Thy smithy's heat has turned thy brain,
thou simpleton. Open the door! For now
it is as if a burning mark of shame
were branded on my forehead at this moment.

VELAND

Thou wouldst not see again girdle and tire?

BÖDWILD

Jest not, but act: bring me the rubbish here.
[*Tire and girdle appear hanging in the air.*

VELAND

I've messengers, who do this for their master.
Does the work please thee? If not, I destroy it.

BÖDWILD

A god has shaped them, and no human hand,
or else they are a vain and coloured mist.

VELAND

Your highness, deign to stretch your white arm
towards them.

BÖDWILD

It matters not if it be white or black!
Now I see well both tire and girdle hang

on chains of finest gold. How lovely glitters
that one, crown of all crowns! All veiled
in burning play of carbuncles must shine
the head that carries it.

VELAND

Yet hast thou naught to fear
that thy hair's heavy, golden burden
should melt or should grow pale beneath this tire.

BÖDWILD

And yet that girdle almost beats the tire!
How did thy clumsy hand form these fine scales?
Thou hast robbed the ocean clean
of pearls, the mountain of its precious stones.

VELAND

And what would not one do to dress the bride
worthily on her wedding day?

BÖDWILD

Ten thousand horses
would not make up for these two jewels,
not for three kingdoms would I give them up.

VELAND

Yet only when the crown sits on thy temples
will it win all its flaming power and grow
a second sun, like to the other, purple
and threatening, ere it sinks to the ocean's bed.
And so the girdle, too: see, it but sleeps.
What thou see'st in it now is not its true life,
only a sleep: the lovely figures stare
dead in the metal still. And only when
thou lift'st it to thy bosom like a child

and mak'st it welcome, so that like a stem
of living ivory it clings round thee, it wakes up.
Then round thy hips will play the magic gleam
of northern lights, and rings of naked youths,
in the sword dance, will be around thee, bringing
thee homage.

BÖDWILD

Give it here, smith.
[*She tries to fasten the girdle round her hips.*

VELAND

Not that way.

BÖDWILD

How then? Tell me then! Ho, ho,
art thou afraid I'll kill thee? Thy teeth rattle,
and thy face stares at me, as grey as stone.

VELAND

Art willing truly that this hand should touch thee,
and girdle thee?

BÖDWILD

Make haste. O be not mawkish!
To me thou'rt neither fish, nor flesh, nor man, nor
woman.

VELAND

What I'm to thee, thou hast not guessed as yet.
The question loudens: what art thou to me?
The only power before which I must tremble,
hearest thou that? For at the rest I laugh,
all gods, all kings.

Bödwild

Smith, I am but a woman,
and love not women who, armed with men's weapons,
go with them on their forays. Thou need'st fear
nothing from me, if thou'rt obedient.

Veland

I hold my destiny within my hand,
lord of my fate to-day as ne'er before.
My foe out there I've bound on glowing coals,
where he may turn in wild and nameless pain.
I know this, and my heart leaps up for joy.
I fear no more the watchers, nor the waves
which day and night with gloomy measure storm
against the shore; no longer now these make
a prison of Veland's islet. Grief that ate
into my marrow for so long is charred
already in my vengeance' fire.
To-day a hobbling cripple; eagle wings
to-morrow'll bear me up in spacious flight.

Bödwild

Thou speak'st in riddles now, abortion, monster.
Now draw the bolt; I shall not close my eyes
this night truly, for truly, Veland, here
thou'st fashioned what makes night noonday to me.
But it's high time I went. Impatience frets me
to see my women's staring eyes, when they
catch sight of this great, superhuman toy.

Veland

Alas! if now I should not dare to say,
for pity of thee, the word my work demands!

Alas, if now thy young and innocent beauty
should cripple me, old wizard that I am!
Thou think'st that gods wait on thee, and thy foot
walks on into their realm on coloured rainbows;
while clear before my soul stands thy true fate.

Bödwild

O do not think that any dread creeps o'er me
on thy account: let not such arrogant madness
ever defile thy grovelling servant's mind.
But hasten, draw the door bolts for me now,
I fear the censure of the king my father.
Thou knowest him, thou knowest how once thy flesh
hung down in tatters, when for some transgression
they scourged thee, and thy howls of pain beat up
even to the palace gates, until it drowned
the howling of the dogs, that it set yelping.

Veland

Gratitude is not King Harald's business,
his children's neither; but I would be grateful.
In bad coin he repays me my good gold;
in like coin, but not worse, I will requite him.

Bödwild

Spiteful, malicious churl, I'll call for help!
Thou'rt at thy trickery; let me breathe the air.
Thou hast entrapped me here in misty vapours.
What could allure me here the second time?

Veland

Nothing. Thou sought'st concealment, flying from the Jarl.

BÖDWILD

Right. So it was. And did the Jarl ask for me?

VELAND

For thy two brothers, who have disappeared.

BÖDWILD

How? Ai and Ingi vanished?

VELAND

So it seems;
else had the Jarl not torn his hair, perhaps.

BÖDWILD

What does it mean? Ai and Ingi lost?
Impossible! All this is but a dream,
not truth. They are the twin-sons of the kingdom.
Without them is the palace dark outside
even as within; and only hours divide
my father and my mother from their graves.
[*Resounding blows against iron come from the outer door.*

BUI

[*Invisible.*
Veland! Good friend! Open, let us in.
[BÖDWILD *shakes the door violently.*

VELAND

Why dost not call?

BÖDWILD

I cannot.

VELAND

It is Bui and Boddi,
the watchers, and they come to look for thee.

BODDI

[*Invisible.*

We're Bui and Boddi, Veland. Thou know'st us.
We come with good intentions, be assured.
We use our office mildly, as thou knowest.

VELAND

Your grace, give them a sign, make yourself known.

BÖDWILD

[*Hoarsely.*

Malignant dog, thou hast robbed me of my voice.

VELAND

They come as treasure seekers, and thou art the
treasure.

BUI

[*Invisible.*

I'm Bui, Bui, once thy fate was near to mine;
many a good word, smith, I've said for thee.
Let's talk of old times.

VELAND

[*To* BÖDWILD.

Talk thou, then.

BÖDWILD

Where am I? Black waves and a ship all black!
Who's standing at the helm? Hold me! I'm
fainting!

VELAND

Both ship and billows are well known to me.
Come, lean on me, it is thy bridegroom, Gunnar.
Let sleep o'ertake thee for a little while
till Bui and Boddi have gone their ways again.

[*Holding, supporting, almost carrying her,* VELAND *leads* BÖDWILD *away through one of the grated doors. Immediately afterwards he returns and lets in* BUI *and* BODDI.

BUI

Well, here we are. 'Tis more than I expected:
thou openest, and thy anger seems to me
to have smoked out. Yet thou hast made us smoke enough,
confounded smith. Jarl Harald and Jarl Gunnar
and all their men with them have gone aboard
in a suspicious mood, and full of grievance.

VELAND

What do you want? Be brief and go your way.
I cannot throw my time away on idlers.

BUI

Do not flare up so soon, thou viper mouth.
We get on tolerably, after all.
Do not forget that I spoke for thee fairly
when they betrayed thee in thy mountain fastness,
and treacherously captured thee and maimed thee.

VELAND

Couldst thou prevent it, slave? Then do not brag.

Bui

Must thou curse ever, churl, and never tire?
What, cur, you bite, even when we scratch your ear?

Veland

O simple blockhead! Whether thou didst enter
to stroke my fell or pull it, is the same to me.
If thou com'st near, I'll tear thy throat for thee.

Boddi

If thou rage on like this, I'll lose my patience.

Bui

Oh, let him! Is he not master in his house?

Veland

I am! And let me tell you, more than ever
since Harald fed himself upon my bloody sweat.

Bui

Ours too he likes: that is the way of kings!
But let us now at last, like valiant comrades,
talk trustfully, and not forever quarrel.

Veland

To save you all your trouble, and lest thoughts
might seize you to attempt to push your paunches,
panting and bootless, through a needle's eye:
also that your coarse fingers may not break
on knots no Bui or Boddi may unloose:—
hear me and lay my runes to mind; convey them
to the Jarl, and be rewarded for the message.
I've fashioned me a prison and secured it
with heavy bolts made of such steel that even

the god of thunder's hammer could not spring it.
But locked fast in this prison, lies, mark this,
the Jarl's own bloody, lacerated heart.
'Twas I that cut it out and locked it there.
Another thing: ye seek for Bödwild; she is here.
Go: tell the Jarl and his intended son,
the famous Gunnar, tell them clearly this:
Veland, the serf, invites you to the wedding.
Hear: to the wedding Veland asks both Jarls.
And, if they're eager, tell them that two goblets,
two miracles are shaped by me already,
filled with an ardent drink as red as blood.
Say that King Harald's heart will be their fare.

Bui

Thou speakest terrible and blasphemous words,
abortion made of dirt and fire! And yet
thou giv'st us riddles which like empty bubbles
blow themselves up and burst. This oft has been
thy way.
But to thy bitter pain we'll tell the Jarl.

Veland

Do it! This ring, this cut gold, take for thanks.
And make this too known to him: tell my lord
that every hole, pit, shaft and cavern
made by thy mole, thy crippled smith, the whole
satanic earthwork will fly open, burst
by a wild shriek of jubilation (tell him
this simply so) and then will Veland rise
with pinions in the air, and thou wilt see him
circle and vanish like the eagle.

[Bui *and* Boddi *retire.* *Amid insane leaps of joy* Veland *breaks out into mad laughter.*

VELAND

O day of festival! All is ordained.
Now hesitate no longer, Veland: quick,
to work! Take now the first step on the stair
that soon the weakling with the fragrant locks
will walk down into horror's black abyss,
the white-hot stones hissing beneath his feet.
Now come out, ye king's sons, come hither.

[*The king's sons* AI *and* INGI, *very beautiful boys, come through one of the grated doors in the interior of* VELAND'S *dwelling.*

VELAND

It's time, ye princes, ye thought of returning.

AI

Already, when we have but now arrived?

INGI

Thou bristly-headed, shaggy bear, thou'rt wrong.
Thou'lt not be free of us till evening darkens;
at earliest morning we'll be here again.

VELAND

But what if they should miss you at the palace?

AI

They think we're only hunting in the woods.
There we are often many hours together,
and we have bullied so the Jarl, our father,
he dare not send the hunter, Atli, with us.

VELAND

How long, then, think ye, you've been on the
island,
my lads, since first your boat beached on the shore?

AI

Hardly an hour since then, a tiny moment.

VELAND

Often a moment may become a small
eternity, a small eternity
become a moment. Three days and three nights
have gone since, answering to your knocking,
I let you into the smithy.

INGI

O, say rather
it is three weeks or years, smith. If one lies
or speaks in jest, why make the jest so thin?
And why not make the lie a good fat lie?

VELAND

How strange! You like to be with me. Has no one
warned you against me and my dark designs?

INGI

We saw thy hearth fire, and we would ourselves
discover if thou wert a dragon truly,
lying on treasure spitting fire to guard it.

VELAND

And thus, driven on by evil magic, all
King Harald's children fly into this light
whose roots are nourished from the gulf of hell.

Say, have ye found the dragon now that breathes
corruption? Tell me; how seem I to you?

Ingi

Thou'rt a poor cripple, lamed, yet rich in arts.
At thy hand's work we cannot look enough.

Ai

No, he who called thee dragon did not know thee.
Thou'rt like a good child, or a poor, sick beast.

Ingi

Thou keepest nothing, givest all away
as soon as thou dost guess one half-desires it.

Veland

Oh, oh!

Ai

What makes thee groan so, smith?

Veland

Oh, oh!
No more, I cannot! Go! choose what you will,
as much as you will, rings, buckles, shoulder
belts—
but go. Oh, oh!—ah!—go! Look not at me!

Ingi

What ails thee now? Thou groanest so,
thou sendest terror through my very marrow.
What pains thee?

VELAND

Pestilent, damned brats, go now!
[*He tears the bandages from his wounds and flings them away.*
Heat irons, heat the irons, do ye hear me?
And bore them in my wounds.

AI

Is it thy wounds?
Thy open wounds are paining thee?

VELAND

Let be;
it's better now.

AI

Why art thou silent, then?
They're better? Why dost gnash thy teeth together?
Say, poor serf, how we can help thee.

VELAND

Leave off! Leave off the torture! Rather kill me.

AI

Call'st thou it torture, when we try to help thee?

VELAND

You're called to succour me in fearful ways
and not as your heart's wish is.

AI

Now again
thou grind'st thy teeth together. Even now

thy eyes beseeched; already they shoot forth
lightnings of gloomy rage. No one's sure of thee,
and it's said truly, when thou touchest one
with velvet pads, thou seek'st but for the place
to plant thy rending claws.

Veland

[*Altered.*

It is so, boy; come nearer to me; for
the gossip did not lie, who told thee that.

Ingi

Yet thou spok'st to us of the golden discs,
that thou wouldst show us. Where are they?
In heaven once the gods played with them
as children, thou didst say, and the air rang
clear with the flight of the gods' golden toys.

Veland

Ah, wait, now I can call to mind those discs;
twelve rounds they were, of heavy, refined gold;
when they lay still, each was a full round moon;
but cast, each was a glittering sun.
No light at night was needed for this game,
for all was lighted clear by the rejoicing
of these bright children of the gods, the glorious
ringing
of their bright toys, and glittering
of flying suns and moons.—
A demon stole them, stole the golden discs,
and the gods grew old and peevish, cold and
withered.

Ingi

Art thou the devil stole them?

Veland

I was shown them
by her, alas! the swan-winged, who betrayed me.
Yet on betrayal is all creation founded!—
We bore them up into the light together
out of a deep ravine that gaped in Wolfstal.
How quickly rang with birdsong all the valley!

Ingi

Well then, come show us now these wondrous discs!
He's silent. He is altered. What's befallen him?

Ai

Veland! Ho, Veland!

Ingi

With lids opened wide
he only turns the white of his eyes upon us.
Now we should go. Call his name loud once more,
that he may let us through the iron door.

Ai

Veland!

Ingi

He does not hear. He has concocted
another farce to torture us. Does he not shiver
through all his carcass like as aspen leaf,
and seem sunk in himself, quite blind and dumb?

Ai

Music, a ringing as of lyres and iron,
hear'st thou it too?

Ingi

And never heard I sound
like this; amidst it blows as of a hammer.
Whence comes it hither? From all sides it presses.

Ai

Thou'rt wrong: it thrills out from his brow and breast.

Ingi

Yes, it is true. How mightily it breaks forth,
the flood storms on. I scarce can keep my foothold.
Power streams out from him as from a god.

Ai

Hark, from his breast now lovely voices float.
O that these sounds of heavenly jubilation
might never leave me till I breathe my last!

Chorus of Women's Voices

Maidens from the south flew through Myrkwidr.
They sat on the shore of the lake and rested.
Span lovely linen, the southern women.
One was called Egil, the second Slagfidr,
but Veland took Hervar the White to wife.

Veland

Ah! woe is me! Hervar, dost thou not hear
swans' pinions beating high o'er the melting snow
for the last time? And then away; they fly
back to the south again, from whence they came.

Chorus of Women's Voices

From the hunt returned the foot-weary huntresses,
Slagfidr and Egil, and found halls deserted;
they went out and in and looked around them.
Then Egil went after Älrun to the east,
and Slagfidr southwards, to find Swanwit.
While Veland sat in Wolfstal,
beat glittering gold and hard bright gems,
and bound the rings in lime-tree bast.
And so he waited his lovely wife,
waited until she should come again.

Ai

Now all is still again. Can he be dead?

Veland

Yes, I am dead, since I must wake again
out of this dream, and see the viper brood
of my worst foe, that bound me ever here,
so that I might not follow my beloved.
O misery! O infinite misery
of deprivation. But have patience! Now
vengeance' pinions sprout light at the asking
of my bloodthirsty cunning; they will lift me
in giant circles soon to follow you,
the missed king's sons: you cannot escape me now.
Poor puppets, come then: go into that room.
Millions like you are born of women yearly
so that Jarl Harald still may have stout youths
to dung his fields. I too exact my tax from him:
for soon my garden too must blossom now.

Ai

Open the door, thou demon! I command thee.

VELAND

And I command thee and thy brother: go in there!

INGI

Ai, go back! It reeks of dried blood here,
and rusty iron fetters lie around,
and bearded heads, that seem all smeared with
blood.

AI

A net invisible, too strong for me,
draws me in there. It is malicious magic!
Smith, set me free! I am the king's son, and
I will be king some time. Who disobeys
my words, the gallows then will gape for him.

VELAND

I'll show you a coffer all of heavy iron,
wherein I guard the twelve bright, golden discs.
The toys of the gods await you: do but seize them.

AI

Keep thy toys. Let us free, or I will teach thee
of what a mighty ruler's blood I am.

VELAND

No prayer will help thee. Thy way is ordained.

AI

How now? Thou call'st commanding praying,
wretched monster?

INGI

O let us live, good Veland, let us live!

VELAND

Yes, he knows better what's in store for you.
Haste! And be grateful to me! For what others
with heavy labour gain in tens of years,
falls in your lap, ere ye are scarcely fledged.

AI

Jarl Harald! Hear, King Harald! Hear thy son!
O had I stayed away from Veland's isle
and never disobeyed thy word. My father,
save me; in my dire need I cry to thee!

VELAND

So did I oft. Be sure, he will not hear thee.

AI

Ingi, hold me back.

INGI

I'm whirled away.
It is as if we were both in a whirlpool.

[*Both are swept as if by magic through the door of a dungeon, where there is a rattling of heavy fetters.*

AI

[*Within.*

All dark. Here poisonous reptiles crawl in muddy pools.

INGI

O sun and meadow, wave and sea and birdsong!

VELAND

The iron chest yawns open; gaze but in,
all your desires will be fulfilled at once.

[*There is heard the iron lid of the chest falling and shutting with a crash. After that the door of the dungeon does the same.*

Now it is done, and as at thy command
once they cut through my sinews, so to-day
I do to thee. But now to work again!
To work! The time goes by!
What noise is that? It's like the shepherd Ketill.
There's no help if it's he, for his flute's sound
makes iron portals melt, snaps every bolt.

[KETILL *enters playing a flute. A gentle, saintlike apparition.*

KETILL

[*Lays aside the flute.*

Forgive me that I come here, busy smith.

VELAND

Thou hast come here before and never sought excuse.

KETILL

I came when thou didst call to me in need.

VELAND

If I have ever called. 'twas not in words.
Never was Veland heard to beg for pity.

KETILL

'Tis thy sad lot that calls me to thee, Veland.

VELAND

Ketill, no more! Else thou wilt be its victim.

KETILL

Rolling in riches and uncounted treasure,
thou livest here most wretched of the wretched.

VELAND

No more, no more! All misery is behind now.

KETILL

So hast thou often said, when bloody sweat
rained from thy brow, and thy eye's pallid horror
spoke of the throbbing of thy wounds.
His suffering is immortal who's immortal.

VELAND

Thou liest. I am immortal, my pain not.
Even to-day I burn it out forever.

KETILL

Yet still thou tremblest, thy teeth rattle
and not with cold. Drink this; it takes away
the fever; it is good for more than sheep.

VELAND

Thy wretched potion will not still this fever.

KETILL

Then may my flute's notes, as already oft,
drop sweet appeasement on thy soul's wild fire.

VELAND

O shepherd, thou know'st not the flames' delight.

KETILL

Yet could I damp them, smith, I'd do it gladly.

VELAND

My blood thou canst not see; blood only can still
vengeance.

KETILL

Gladly I'd shed my own, if I could only
put out thereby this dreadful fire of vengeance;
for it will lay the world in ashes yet.

VELAND

Give, then, thy blood away for whom thou wilt;
I thirst not for thy physic, for my own is ready.
Of its pure, glowing fire thou knowest not.

KETILL

Veland, do good to them that hurt thee;
love them that hate thee, and thou wilt be healed.

VELAND

I laugh at thee, and they laugh at thee, too,
the Invisible Ones, whose lips drool even now
in yearning, they're so hungry for my feast.
Now Ketill, trusty servant, get thee hence.
The word's gone forth, Bui and Boddi have told
already of my wedding. I must hasten
to make due preparation for the banquet,
arrange the seats of honour, beaker, bread and
wine.

KETILL

O smith, bless them that curse thee! Do not curse

when thou art cursed! Thou dost but double the
curse
in doing so; and a twofold curse will smother
thy blessing and their blessing.

VELAND

It's too late, Ketill. I've unleashed the hell-hound
already, and before he's torn his blood-feast
to the last morsel, no god may prevail
to force him back into his chains again.

KETILL

Farewell; in all thy misery think of me.

VELAND

O misery! holy misery! now I know
for the first time and wholly thou art that
which draws me up in glory to the gods.

KETILL

Farewell. If ever thou shouldst need me, call me.

VELAND

Stay! I have ever heard thy flute-notes gladly,
and the soft rustling of thy flocks was dear
to me. And often, when I listened to them,
my brain was freed that the long, hot nights
through
battled in vain for surcease from the anguish
of waking hours. Then I slept and had peace,
and knew no more the raging of my pain.
And for that take my thanks.—
I'm almost sad that thou goest from me, Ketill,
for this, in truth, this is the final time

I'll look upon thee here. When morning greys
I fare away from this accursed island
far in the red of morning. But the ghosts
of my long anguish will stay here with thee.
Farewell, loved shepherd! Thanks! And once
more thanks!

Ketill

Shall I play thee a parting tune, or hast thou
a better music now, and need'st not mine?

Veland

Good shepherd, play; for not in vain I shaped
thy flute out of a sacred osier,
out of a branch where Hervar sat and sang
while glittered her thick hair, a golden river.
Let now a distant echo of her voice
make my heart leap in my inhuman breast.
O ye vales, gardens, islands full of bliss,
to whose breast soon my pinions now will bear me,
when I have forded quite the bloody swamp!

[Ketill *has gone. The notes of his flute die away.*

[*After a short, gloomy silence.*

How comes it that thou growest pale, Veland,
and that thy palsied heart can stir no more,
like a fieldmouse gripped by a hand of iron?
Thou art lonely, and thy breast betrays it,
in the rapturous core of thy too blissful deed.
Thou'st driven many fiery rivers through the
sluices,
and shouted when the flowing, white-hot metal
spread out into the mould. Why art thou now
so meek? Why hast thou deathly drops of sweat

upon thy brow, and in thy ice-cold hands
the rigidness of death, when, procreating
their form, the fires of vengeance should break
out?—
Hecla's red ardour breaks through ice and snow;
it melts the rocks and whirls them bubbling down
into the valley, in the hate of love,
ravaging all that stands against it.
Awake, Bödwild, come to me; have no fear.

[Bödwild *appears again.*

Bödwild

When wilt thou set me free from my dream,
smith?

Veland

Not till thou hast dreamed the whole dream to the
end,
if thou may'st hold this for a dream, king's daugh-
ter.

Bödwild

Although all this seems real, yet it's a dream.
Since that time thou didst take me in thy arms,
when I was but a child and cried in terror
to be set free again, I've dreamt this dream
and everything as it is happening now.

Veland

And what, what was the dream that thou didst
dream so often?

Bödwild

Almost as soon as my eyes close, my father
speaks to me: Child, keep away from Veland's isle.

VELAND

And then?

BÖDWILD

I promise, yet I always go again,
as I have done to-day, and other times.

VELAND

What didst thou do?

BÖDWILD

Ever I sought the island.

VELAND

Even though he said: avoid it?

BÖDWILD

Yes, even though.

VELAND

But thou didst say even now that thou art dreaming.

BÖDWILD

Ah, that's because dreams ever confuse my mind.

VELAND

Then thou art here in truth, and not in dream?

BÖDWILD

I'm here, it's certain, where else should I be?

VELAND

At home, asleep upon thy bed, Bödwild.

Bödwild

Ghost of my dream, how strange it is that thou
shouldst point my error out and set me right!

Veland

Thou liest in bed and sleepest?

Bödwild

Yes, it seems so,
But such a dream is strangest slumber truly.

Veland

Wouldst thou awaken now, or dream on rather?

Bödwild

To waken, I fear, stands not in my power now.

Veland

Out of thy dream thou speakest purest truth.

Bödwild

So say'st thou ever, and ever starest at me,
when thou dost threaten me with dreadful night-
mare.
But I will shriek, and so awaken myself.

Veland

Try it.

Bödwild

Wherefore? I know well, monster, dream
is dream.

Veland

Thou dar'st not. That is good. Be wholly meek.

So feel'st thou not the magic chains which bind thee.

BÖDWILD

Through a hundred dreams I'd know thy malice, smith.
To-day thou wilt not chain me, as oft before.

VELAND

Then dash to bits the vault that covers thee.

BÖDWILD

Thou speakest of a vault that is not there.

VELAND

'Tis well. If thou dost dream, what dream'st thou then?

BÖDWILD

I would go home, but something holds me always.

VELAND

What holds thee?

BÖDWILD

Sometimes this, and sometimes that.

VELAND

What is't?

BÖDWILD

A bride's dress now, and then a door and then the king and all his men in front of Veland's cave.

VELAND

And Veland's dream consigns thee to this fate?

BÖDWILD

Yea, and a worse fate still, I know it well,
so that to-day it brings me little fear.

VELAND

Yet, tell me, is the dream more heavy to-day?

BÖDWILD

Truly, for there's a wedding in the palace.

VELAND

What is the wedding? And who will be wedded?

BÖDWILD

Bödwild, the princess, dost not know that, smith?

VELAND

Whom will she marry? Veland?

BÖDWILD

Art thou mad,
spectre? I wed King Gunnar, as is known.

VELAND

Gunnar? Is he not that milk-visaged puppet?

BÖDWILD

Gunnar is Gunnar, slave, and more I say not.

VELAND

I am the shadow of thy dream: hast thou
secrets from me, thy other self, Bödwild?

Bödwild

Things are one does not own even to oneself,
and thou, my other self, smith, mak'st me laugh.

Veland

Then it would seem thou dost not dream now, sweetheart.

Bödwild

How darest thou call me that, vile spawn of night?

Veland

What of it? Thou but dreamest.

Bödwild

Yet beware,
for often rage, ten times strong, takes me dreaming.

Veland

It is thy fear that thou'lt be buried alive.

Bödwild

Let me out! See, my father's on the throne.
Arrayed my mother stands, and all her women.
The horns blare, and the billowing people shout.
The bridegroom waits and all his princes round him!

Veland

Let father sit and mother wait and Gunnar stand,
stupid as oxen at the gate. What of it?

Bödwild

Is't nothing if the bride's not at the wedding?

Veland

Be not afraid, be not afraid, thou dreamest merely.
Since childhood thou hast known this Veland dream.

Bödwild

Hideous mask, yes, truly, yes, I dream!
But yet I see my mother—her hair flying,
crying for Ai and Ingi. She leaves the palace gates,
her gaze fixed wildly, foam upon her lips.

Veland

It is but Veland's dream, that thou hast known for long.
And Harald Harfagar has often dreamed it,
he, too, upon his royal bed, while from each pore
broke in cold pearls the poisoned, deathly sweat.

Bödwild

I would awake.

Veland

Does not fear seize thee now?

Bödwild

Monster! No! No! Thou crouchest there before me!

Veland

Even so! Proud must the neck be that with coarse

work-hardened hands Veland would bend,
or if it must be, break. Let us to bed.

Bödwild

Once more I know my Veland's dream. By this
I know it and will wait in patience till
the winter sun, as ever, waken me.

Veland

But how then does thy Veland's dream continue?

Bödwild

I'll call for help!

Veland

Call then, loud as thou may'st.

Bödwild

Hear me, up in the palace there! I cry for help!

Veland

They hear thee. And I've sent them word already.
Already their swift ships have left the shore.

Bödwild

Oh, I am fettered!

Veland

So thou art.

Bödwild

Save me! Save me! Hasten!

VELAND

Behold, King Harald, and thou too, thou queen!
Here Veland slowly twists around his hand
this dreadful gold, that issued from your blood.
[*He twists* BÖDWILD's *unloosened hair about his hand.*

BÖDWILD

O, I am helpless! Pity!

VELAND

No! No pity!

BÖDWILD

Veland, have pity!

VELAND

Now the second time
a word's escaped thee which even in thy dreams,
even in thy Veland's dream, thy arrogant lips
would never else have let pass by them.
[*Horns are heard.*

BÖDWILD

I hear King Harald's horns. I am here! I am here!

VELAND

It's so. The wedding guests draw near, my love.
But my bolts only yield to my command.

BÖDWILD

Alas!

VELAND

O, what refreshment, this "alas"!
That one sweet trustful word weds thee and me.

BÖDWILD

Take thy rough, savage hand from out my hair!

VELAND

Then quench the fire that melts both hair and hand together.

BÖDWILD

Thou'st made me helpless, miserable churl!
Away, uncleanly claw, out of my hair!

VELAND

It takes a bath; the accursed hand laves now,
the servant's hand, its dust and dirt away.

BÖDWILD

Thou fearful devil, set me free.

VELAND

This ring
will clasp my hand, stay wedded to my hand,
until we rise again from bridal couch.

BÖDWILD

Away, wretch, I will tramp thee!

VELAND

At thy pleasure.
Do what thou canst or may'st, I'll do the like.

Bödwild

Beast!

Veland

Now King Harald, now King Harald, see, now see!

Bödwild

Beast! Never!

Veland

Bödwild, Bödwild! Bödwild, Bödwild! Oh!

[*They sink down locked together. A long silence. Then is heard.*

Chorus of Boys' Voices

Maidens from the south flew through Myrkwidr.
They sat on the shore of the lake and rested.
Span lovely linen, the southern women.
One was called Egil, the second Slagfidr,
but Veland took Hervar the White to wife.

[Harald's *horns sound nearer and nearer.*

END OF THE SECOND ACT

THE THIRD ACT

Bödwild *sits a little higher than* Veland *and holds his head on her lap.*

Bödwild

O, what distress befell thee, what dire need
was heaped on thee in these years filled with pain,
with sorrows piled up mountain high, thou god?
Accursed be my blood seeing that it is
my father's blood, sole source of all thy woes.
I hate my father, curse the golden bed
in which he laid me when I was a suckling.
For even it was fashioned from thy blood
and pain, and I was guilty
as I lay there enjoying blessed rest.
Strike me, maltreated hands!

Veland

What drops so hot
on me like rain upon a summer's night?
What is it laves so burningly my face,
and washes away myself and all in me?
Say shall I pass away, with all I am?

Bödwild

Cursed be the floor I trod in the king's house,
because it did not tell me that thy blood
and sweat created it! Because it did not cry
and pierce with nails my feet, all unaware.

Cursed be the golden roof because it covered me,
guarding me safe from sleet and hail, while here
thou didst endure thy bitter servitude.
Be it accursed, because in winter's dark
and dreary nights, it imaged forth to me
the shining of the sun, so that my heart
leapt in my breast for gladness. while black night
and grief lay smothering upon thee here.

VELAND

All these be blessed now! May they be blessed.
Since they have served thee, may they all be
blessed.

BÖDWILD

Cursed be the bit that curbed my tossing steed,
the bridle that did not burn within my hand,
since from thy art the Jarl exacted both.
O, thou holy through suffering! O, thou blessed
through pain! Thou free through the serf's burden
of chains,
partaking highest honour in deepest shame!
Through impotence mighty, yea almighty!
Thy hand, even chained, the doer of all good deeds!
Wounded, and yet physician of all the world!
Thou, drinking serpent poison, eating serpent
poison,
wast yet the terror of all poisonous worms,
through leprosy pure, lovely through scabby sores!
Beautiful through thy horrible idol mask!
Thou, hard and shining, like the diamond, all un-
clouded,
refined and hardened by humiliation
within the crucible of the vile!

VELAND

O Bödwild,
thou'rt not thy father's daughter.

BÖDWILD

Never yet
did praise's balsam still a wounded bosom
like this, beloved.

VELAND

Never were my wounds laved
by such a stream as overflows from misery now.—
But now go home; thy father waits.

BÖDWILD

He waits?
Then he may wait, like crag above the bay.
As that is drawn to that I'm drawn to him,
no more.

VELAND

Thy mother cries for thee, foam on her lips.

BÖDWILD

Then let her cry until she's hoarse: what is't to me?

VELAND

Thou are the last of all her children, beside thee
there's not one living that her womb has borne.

BÖDWILD

She has Ai and Ingi, my two brothers.

VELAND

No!—
When I confess a crime, I do not lie.

Bödwild

Then be they living, be they dead, it's one!
And die their mother and father after them!
I hate them both, would never see them more.

Veland

Art thou so hard? Now first compassion wakens
within me for thy parents' bitter grief.

Bödwild

O tear this plant up by the roots
that must destroy thy true strength, handing thee
over again, twice impotent, to betrayal.

Veland

The wedding is prepared, the double throne
awaits the bridal pair in the wedding hall.

Bödwild

Thou'lt cast me off—so grief has hardened thee—
after thy heavenly fire has made us one?

Veland

Jarl Gunnar has thy father's word, thy mother's,
thine.
The Heavenly Father's rage avenges broken oaths.

Bödwild

Veland, Veland, have mercy on me now!

Veland

Jarl Gunnar is the fairest man in all the north,
the strongest, too, of all, so it is said.

Bödwild

O let me dry thy wounds clean with my hair!
O grant me but that joy, and grant me too
to spit once in the face of this Jarl Gunnar!

Veland

Why dost not choose my mangled countenance,
that oft has served as target for thy spittle?

Bödwild

[*Cries out and flings herself at his feet.*
Veland, have pity on me! Have pity! Oh!

Veland

Stand up! The horns throng nearer now. It is
as if their sound recalled a thought to me
long since forgot. How strangely can a moment
transform us!

Bödwild

Take me, Veland,
O take me as thy handmaid, Veland, or
if thou dost wish, thy paramour. O let
my hair be carpet for thy wounded feet,
and my bare hands will not despise thy service,
giving worth to thee, who only give me worth.
But do not cast me from thee, do not cast me
back to the wolves who howl around the door.

Veland

They're wolves to me, to thee a splendid train
of noblemen and princes who are ready
to worship on their knees when thou appearest.

Bödwild

Veland, if they are wolves to thee, let's flee
at once! And those who dare to come too close
after our flying heels, let us send home
with bloody heads.

Veland

One time, a sooty weaver,
I wove with bloody hand a pair of pinions,
a mighty twin pair for my use; so would
it seem to me yet when I think of it.
If I but knew now why? Where could I breathe
if not here in this paradise?

Bödwild

Cursed be
the place where only sorrow bloomed for thee.
May the deep swallow up this Veland's isle,
that willing gave itself as torture rack
for thee a god! And be accursed too
the bitter sea-waves, sycophantic, cowardly,
lapping the shore forever, day and night,
and hindering thy escape!

Veland

Why dost thou curse
this holy island, daughter of the king?
My mother's breast is not more dear to me.

Bödwild

Veland, the enemy thunders at thy door,
demanding entry.

VELAND

Child, it's but the south wind,
the tender south, the fragrant south, beloved south,
that bears with it incense of sultry woods,
of glamorous woods.

BÖDWILD

Veland,
the door flies into splinters! Waken now;
thou sleepest! If thou canst not guard me now
from Gunnar's hands, then this steel in my hand
will do it.

VELAND

Good. Now I awaken. Thundering
the rubble of the wall breaks in, whose bulwark
I've undermined; and he who loosened it
can no more hold it up again.
Now, Bödwild, my proud maiden, let me act.
Hither; this gloomy cellar will receive thee.
'Twill hide thee safe behind its iron walls,
and when it opes again at my sign, thou
wilt stand, thy naked beauty's statue there.

BÖDWILD

I'll not neglect what thou shouldst ever ask me.
Expose me to the hated enemies' eyes,
not to their hands' or fetters' slavery.

VELAND

Bödwild, be not afraid. The power is mine.

BÖDWILD

But countless are my father's men, his mastiffs,

gold-spotted, howl and rage around the door.

VELAND

Only impatient wedding guests, these brawlers,
whom I have asked. It's time to set the table.

BÖDWILD

O Veland, terror seizes me, for thou
art not a man. Now in this instant thou
art self-transfigured to a god; my fate
has given me in marriage to a god!

VELAND

Hold thyself firm that terror may not kill thee,
if thou shouldst see me as a beast again.

BÖDWILD

Or beast, or god, I know that thou art Veland,
and this I know, that thou art he whom I
must thank that I am I.
And if I died, oh then, 'twould be for joy.

VELAND

No one can die for joy in this world, not even thou.

BÖDWILD

No; for who tastes such joy as mine, can never die.
He lives eternal, even in the instant.

VELAND

O trust not the deceit of such eternity!
Thou seemest now to me a single being,
and yet already I'm another, thou
too art another. And incessantly
with every moment others throng up in me,

and mock at every dam, tear open every dyke.
Now soon the fire breaks out that chars all round it
and chars its vessel too. Am I a god,
I can't escape myself, nor yet the fate
that chose me for its toy. And without pity
it drives me to fulfil myself, and spit out
the gruesome night-spawn that within my head
it's brought to life, a nest of vipers there.
But now let night conceal thee,
before grey morning brings thee to thy father.

[Bödwild *vanishes.* Veland *is alone. There is heard the barking of the mastiffs, shouts before the entry, and blows of iron bars against the brazen door.*

Veland, now art thou Veland once again
and wholly, when thy maiden is not here
who makes thee servant, and puts out the fires
of thy revenge upon her breast. But now
the abyss of vengeance boils again in me,
and I'm no more called Veland, am not Veland,
nor soul, nor body more: I'm vengeance only.
I am called vengeance, called so and I am so;
I'm nothing else. Oh, now a pack of hounds
howls in my belly, and their yelping drowns
the clamour of these yellow-spotted mastiffs.
In hunger's agony which gnaws their bowels
they almost strangle in the brazen collars
wherewith their keeper holds them strict confined.
The fury of the hunt, the thirst for blood,
the lust for slaughter maddens them.
They sniff, and sniff, and sniff their hated prey.
O Harald, what strong magic dost thou carry,
intoxicating me with thy approach,
as blood makes drunk the stoat, so that when I

pick out thy scent, beloved, in the air
with greedy nostrils, blind my eyes become
for all but thee, and my ears stopped, and all
my senses sealed and deaf for all but thee.
And lustful hunger purrs for torture, rack,
burning and pain for thee. I had killed thee
long since, were not one death too little for
the wrong thou didst me, or that thus my rage
would be left orphaned by thy death. Thou gavest
me
a thousand deaths, and I should compensate thee
with but one death, a little farthing's worth?
If that were my intention, Harald, where
would thy dust be to-day?
My life-long study
has been how I may torture thee. And now,
even if revenge's fury make me bungler
and weakling, I will show thee what I am.

[*He takes his place by a sort of weaving loom and crouches there motionless. Now appear* Bui *and* Boddi *feeling their way with iron bars, also* Gunnar.

Harald

[*Still invisible.*

Veland! Veland!

Bui

The cave resounds like thunder.

Boddi

Cave after cave. Who'd chart this labyrinth?

Harald

[*As before.*

Veland!

Atli

Is this an echo only
of the king's shout that cries around us, Boddi,
a thousand voices crying, Veland, Veland?

Gunnar

O what a bitter wedding night is fixed for me!
I knew not that such pain was in the world,
or that a man was able to endure it.
Bödwild, Bödwild, I cry to thee in need!

Bui

Peace, Jarl. Choke down the cry within your breast.
It's food and balsam to the hellish smith,
gives his blind hate a hundredfold more strength.

Harald

Ai! Ingi! Beloved sons, your father calls.
If you still live, deliverance nears. Answer me!
[Harald *appears with armed men.*

Bui

Not so, Jarl Harald! Only cunning's power
will overcome the churl.

Harald

Where art thou, Bödwild?
Ai and Ingi, let yourselves be known
with but a sigh, or but a sound, or but a cry.

Boddi

Something is sparkling ghastly green in the darkness here.

Atli

But now I knocked against a strange construction,
and motionless therein a grey thing crouches,
with giant wings, most like a bat.

Bui

It's he!
No nearer, Atli! And King Gunnar, halt there!
I saw him once before like this, so rigid,
as if of stone. Then did he strike unseen
and deadly blows, with power invisible.

Gunnar

O Jarl, Jarl Harald, what a fearful servant
and master of all horrors hast thou hired!
No king's hand ever dared so much before.

Harald

Jarl, this is no more Veland now that once
I lamed and bound to serve me. Yet I know not
who he may be. O, Veland, Veland, move!
Strip off the ban from thee and us! It is enough.
Thou art requited now to the utter end,
and there's no harder blow than those I've borne.

Atli

What did the monster spit and snarl at us?

Bui

The green flames dart out of his eyes. His face
smokes sulphurously like the fish's hide.

GUNNAR

The torches here!

ATLI

O, had I not left the mastiffs
outside the door-post at the king's command!
Not even when they scent the polar bear
does their hair bristle up so fiercely, or
their mood become so furious, as when
their muzzles scent the smith.

GUNNAR

Jarl, hold thy courage firm,
for never hast thou had more need of strength
than now in any combat, any battle.

HARALD

Veland, I offer thee my hand in compact.
We'll slit our arms and mingle blood with blood.
Thy hate destroys thyself. Veland, forgive, forget!

VELAND

Thou'rt wrong! Thou'rt wrong! I love thee well,
O Jarl!

HARALD

O Veland, this is not thy truthful meaning.

VELAND

I love thee: else would hate bind me to thee?

HARALD

It is as if thou ringed me all in iron.

VELAND

As thou didst me.

HARALD

But now I say, be free!

VELAND

Yet I escape not from the universe's
mad violation.

HARALD

Give me my children, Veland,
and be my brother. My wife is seized with madness.

VELAND

I know.

HARALD

The royal castle, thronged with guests,
waits Bödwild, this young warrior's bride. Thou see'st him
pale and disfigured now with grievous sorrow.

VELAND

He lives.

HARALD

To such a life death's preferable.
This day which should have perfected his joy
will turn it all to boundless grief,
if thou wilt not take pity on his lot.

VELAND

He lives, he lives: now truly you both live!

HARALD

Do good for once; learn to do good at last.
Thou hast made the world a grave; now break it open.

VELAND

Thou livest, ye live truly now, yes, both.

HARALD

Linger not out the time with this dark saying.
Bring him his bride, and bring me my two sons,
and through the realm my harper will proclaim
thy fame, now and in every future time,
thy suffering too, and what a wrong I did thee.

VELAND

I search and search: only have patience with me.

GUNNAR

O Jarl, no longer can I curb my tongue.
No longer can I listen while this slave
speaks so; nor hear my king reply as now.

VELAND

[*To* GUNNAR.
I should be sorry if a bolt should strike thee.

GUNNAR

Not me, if I can land my axe upon thy head.

VELAND

Ungracious guests! Know ye not to what feast
I asked you? Did not Bui and Boddi give my message?

HARALD

No: only brainsick madness came from them.

VELAND

Are ye such ineffectual messengers?

HARALD

Bödwild is with thee. Thou dost ask us to a wedding,
and something else. And all the smithy here
will ring with joy, and thou thyself wilt soar
up and away then, like a vulture.

VELAND

No, like an eagle; and all this will be.
But wedding guests, methinks, who are invited
to a rich repast, and then to entertainment,
should be more grateful, friendly, unassuming.

HARALD

Jarl Gunnar, I command thee to be silent!—
Veland, we do accept thy invitation.
But if I were to bid thee now, my friend:
be thou my guest, the king's and the queen's guest
up in my golden hall? Where thou, a god,
shalt sit in honour on my throne?
O smith, my hair has whitened in this night.
My children! O my children! Give them back!

VELAND

Till now thou hast been used to cheerful dreams.
What thou dost feel to-day is more my kind:
the daily bread I've gnawed year in, year out.

GUNNAR

Wouldst keep us waiting here still longer, smith?

HARALD

So thou dost not accept me as thy brother,
and scornest both the throne and wedding?

VELAND

No!
Thou see'st, I seat myself upon the seat of honour.
From the wedding too I shall not keep away.

[*A long stone table becomes visible, on which are set beakers and pewter dishes.* VELAND *seats himself on the seat of honour.*

HARALD

Keep your peace, men, I say; provoke him not!
It lies in his power still to alter this
black tomblike night round me to paradise.
See, Veland, bloody sweat of anguish pours
out on my brow. We'll gladly be thy guests;
'tis well. But tell me one thing only: whether
it is allotted I should press once more
Ai and Ingi to my heart. This tell me:
shall I see both my sons again?

VELAND

Thou'lt see the boys again, O wretched Jarl.

HARALD

If that's reserved for me I am not wretched.—
Is this thy knavery? Dost thou, like the cat,
play with thy victim till the blood runs down?

O Veland, turn thy senseless, icy rage
here against me, here on my open breast!
Only take pity on my dear children, smith.
Say but two words: They're free from pain!
and, thy steel in my heart, I will be happy.

VELAND

Then they are free from pain. There, I have said it.

HARALD

Dost thou swear by the pit beneath the ground?

VELAND

By the pit I swear it.

HARALD

O then let me beg
forgiveness for all that I've done against thee,
since thou dost pay me back with good for evil.

VELAND

How else? Thou'rt like a father to me now.

HARALD

Now all be seated. Veland's deeds, it's true,
are still obscure, but now I have his word,
and feel at ease. The breath of spring has melted
his hatred's frost; he has no further spite
reserved for me.

GUNNAR

The lame abomination
shall guarantee to me on oath as well
that Bödwild, my betrothed, shall soon return

to us unharmed in life and body: else
I shall not take my place at this churl's table.

VELAND

Then take my word: the bride shall grace the wedding.

[*All, including* GUNNAR, *take their places at the table.*

GUNNAR

Could I but see the cripple's inmost soul!

VELAND

O jubilation, nameless bliss is there;
there shouts all heaven in triumph. Jarl, I love thee
more than my tongue can say, for never, never
hast thou wronged me. Instead thou didst me good,
good beyond computation, beyond limit.
So seize the drinking cup that stands before thee.
I do the like with mine, as thou canst see.
We pledge forgiveness now from heart to heart.

HARALD

Hear me, ye men, I name myself his brother,
and all our strife I bury with this draught.

[HARALD *and* VELAND *drink to each other.*

A ray of hope, it seemed, broke through this draught.
Why does it pierce me like sharp, deadly steel?
The very air is parched and filled with horror.

Bui

The Jarl is reeling.

Harald

What's in this beaker, smith?

Veland

It's wine, which thine own grapes but lately shed.

Harald

Wine? Is this wine? It sickens me. I'm giddy.

Veland

Drink deeper, and the draught will lend thee strength.

Harald

[*Drinking again.*

Poison! I'm sick.

Veland

Thou often hast been sick.
And without that no feast may end, perchance.

Harald

Dread wine!

Bui

Treachery! The king's lips have turned black.

Boddi

Feelest thou like me? My limbs are heavy as lead.

Harald

What are those cups and beakers thou hast here?
Of what material fashioned?

VELAND

Richer than gold
this substance is, and never did red gold
embrace such precious magic wealth as this.

HARALD

I drank out of a skull, ye men. Away!
[*He flings the goblet against the wall.*

A VOICE

[*Dying away into an agonised sigh.*
Woe, woe, now didst thou wrong Ingi, thy son!

MEN

What was that?

GUNNAR

'Twas Ingi's voice.

VELAND

Yea, that it was.
His father's hand has gruesomely ill-used him.

HARALD

Smith, madness sticks its claws in my poor brain.

VELAND

How oft in madness I've raged here alone.

HARALD

Ingi, my son! Where art thou now? Thy father calls.

He roars for thee like the beast the butcher strangles.

Men and Gunnar

Ingi! Prince Ingi! We're here to rescue thee!

Veland

Patience! In vain you stir my Hades up,
and it will be your fault if its dark tempest
of groans and wails turn all your hearts to stone.

[*There is heard a mysterious, confused howling coming from below.*

Boddi

Who hears this never can rejoice more in the light.

Gunnar

No! No! This must stay hidden, a man could endure it only for a fleeting breath-space.

Veland

I've breathed it and I've heard it all these years.

Atli

A ravening, savage beast fashioned this world.
If I knew death would free me from its rage,
here in this place I'd make an end of life.

Gunnar

Cursed be my mother, that bore me into the world!

Men

[*Together, and confusedly.*

No light's here, only bloody terror and darkness.

HARALD

'Mid all this howling I have only heard
my boys', my children's cries for help; no matter
how black the hour, hope has not died in me.

VELAND

And sure enough, thy hope does not betray thee,
O Jarl. And near, far nearer than thou knowest
is that thou seekest for. If thou'lt but ask,
obedient in the instant thy sweet boys
will show themselves to thee.

HARALD

How now, smith?
Thy words have grown so icy all at once?

VELAND

Because I've cooled my lust upon thy sons.

HARALD

Out with your swords! And that one be accursed
who does not sink his deep into this torturer,
or follow his Jarl's command now to the end.
Show me my boys this instant, Veland.

[*The princes* AI *and* INGI *are perceived in a wan, phosphorescent light. They hold each other by the hand. They have a bloody ring above the ear, and another bloody ring round the neck. From both run streaks of blood.*

VELAND

Thou see'st, the slave obeys when the lord commands.

HARALD

I have seen nothing, nothing by God's light!

GUNNAR

Nor I; yet now I know not where I am
or if I see, or feel, or think, or not.
[*The apparition of the boys vanishes.*
Bödwild, Bödwild! For thy sake am I here,
and that brings clearness to my soul again.
I am a man again when I but think of thee. . . .
Now that thy form appears to my sick soul,
it pierces, like the sun, the mists of night.
Bödwild now in thy regal beauty's might
appear out of the darkness, and like lightning
thou'lt strike this beast away and every terror
with but the lifting of thy radiant lashes.

[*In a radiant golden niche appears* BÖDWILD. *She is entirely unrobed, and stands somewhat in the attitude of the Knidian Aphrodite.*

VELAND

Thou callest not in vain, what thou dost call.

GUNNAR

I see naught. See ye this deceit, men? No.

VELAND

It's no deception. Bödwild's there in flesh and blood.
Bödwild! Thou see'st, she lifts her head and smiles,
and seeks my eyes, not thine, poor wretched Jarl.

GUNNAR

The smith makes fools of us: this is deception.

VELAND

Look on and tell me if the breath of life
does not expand her warm, sweet, rounded breasts.

GUNNAR

Serpent! Accursed serpent!

VELAND

Gunnar, doubt not
that these arms and this bosom and this belly,
are able to vouchsafe man all he wants:
yet truly thirst and hunger are never stilled.

GUNNAR

Take that!

[*He throws his sword at* VELAND, *who catches it and lets it fall on the ground.*

VELAND

King Harald, be my witness,
the Jarl, my guest, has been insulting, broken
the peace here.

HARALD

Bödwild!—I've lost my senses. What hellish phantom
is this once more? The bloody images
of my two sons still in my labouring,
sore-pressed, and terror-palsied heart, appears
this image of life, this image of naked shame,
this image of infamy past all telling.

Ye men, turn your eyes from it, by your faith.
This shameless prostituted picture that shows forth
before your face the daughter of your king
does not dishonour Bödwild in my eyes.

Gunnar

Bödwild!

Harald

Bödwild!

Veland

She glances at you when you call.
You see, King Harald, she does not heed the Jarl.
She hates him, take my word, and for that reason
I'll court Bödwild again; already truly
she has been mine as you behold her now.

Harald

If thou wouldst look in my face, Bödwild,
then do not torture further man or father—
he verily is naught but victim now.
And thou, thou dog, return to thine own vomit.

Gunnar

Bödwild, I'll throw my mantle over thee.

Veland

'Twill fade to naught before such beauty, Jarl.
Moreover thou dost hold she's but a phantom.

Gunnar

Men, cast your mantles over her.

VELAND

But why?
See, she has moved her hand, and chastely hides
the ivory, fair shame already with it.

GUNNAR

Away with this derision!

HARALD

Away! away!

VELAND

Why? Know ye aught more perfect? Saw ye ever
a goddess' frame more sweetly palpitate
in tremulous, voluptuous delight?
Has ever lifeless marble moved more nobly?
Ever the body's movements been more high,
shown such inviolate, pure and holy form?
The artist who would think to paint her, he would
choose despair and impotence and death.

ATLI

How long is this fool going to hold us up
with his jugglery?

VELAND

Should this not be
an entertainment for thee, Atli, who
art lustful still as the wild buck in heat?
And does not the charmer send thee secret smiles?

HARALD

Enough.

VELAND

Not yet! Have patience yet an instant.
Regard now what she does. See, two red apples
she takes up, one in either hand: there streams
a white and smoky vapour up from them.
And now, ye see, she leaves her golden shrine,
steps down. She sets the apples on the table.
Now can the feast begin. King Harald, eat!

HARALD

These are not apples, but red flesh, that quivers.

ATLI

The hearts of two young roes, torn from their breasts.

VELAND

Alti, thou art a hunter, and must know.
Handmaid, now tell them whose hearts thou hast brought.

HARALD

Here hast thou handmaids, Veland?

VELAND

One: one only.

GUNNAR

Hast thou maids here?

VELAND

I've told thee, only one.

GUNNAR

Poor, wretched charlatan, this is not Bödwild.
It is a demon, whom thou throwest its morsel.

VELAND

Servant, hear what he says, and give the man his answer.

HARALD

Back, shameless demon! For a father's pain
is holy. Mock no more my misery.

VELAND

Take this maid for my maid and for naught else.

GUNNAR

I never had believed that any one,
not even the filthiest slut,
could cast herself away upon the smith.

VELAND

Thou speakest truth: she's not a filthy slut.

HARALD

O what illusion! Almost truth's fair picture.

VELAND

Bödwild, pour beer for thy father, and speak to him.
And draught and voice perchance will teach him then
that thou'rt no ghost, no magical illusion.
What, trull, thou hast forgot the wedding beer?
[*He strikes her roughly with his fist.*

MEN

Kill him! He's touched the princess with rough hands.

GUNNAR

What say ye, men? Has madness seized us all?
Art thou the dream that out the deepest slime
of night in poisonous bubbles wells, and pregnant
with every torment throws itself on men,
and stabs, and chokes, and slays? Who heard me
cry out because I could not suffer pain?
Did ever aught force from me sound of fear
or anguish? No . . . not if blood spurted high
out of my heart, would I cry out;
but what breathes on me here tears from my breast
the coward cry of fear.

VELAND

'Twill pass, Jarl.
Best to drink quickly what fate sets before thee.

HARALD

Bödwild!

GUNNAR

Exalted princess!

HARALD

Child! My child!
Bödwild, my child! Is it thou, my well-loved child?

BÖDWILD

I am she, father. Why do you start back so,
when I say that I am the one I am.

HARALD

She speaks! She speaks! What says she? Lose no word.

Bödwild

My father . . .

Harald

Yes, it is the bell-clear tone,
the rich, deep tone with which the palace rooms
echoed so regally. But tell me what she says
and when and how atrocious death befell her:
for this maid's dead.

Veland

The maid is dead, thou thinkest,
that stands here, rich, voluptuous,
and trembling with desire and maddening pleasure?
This woman that smoulders secretly with burning
ardour,
at the least grasp of my coarse pitiless hand?
Come here! No, here! I seize the trull, ye see,
thus, by the hair, and bend her head back so.
She does not fall, for she's strong as an ox.
Whoever wants, may bite her throat through now.

Harald

My realm is his, who'll kill this smith for me.

Gunnar

The smith has bewitched, charmed and corrupted
her.

Veland

If she's bewitched, 'tis I bewitched her: true.

Bödwild

Accursed be he who robbed the smith of his gold!

GUNNAR

What said she now?

HARALD

I cannot understand for this wild tumult.

BÖDWILD

My lawful mate may treat me as he likes;
cursed be who hinders him!

VELAND

Still farther back
I bend her now; already is her body
curved like a crossbow, yet she feels no pain,
but only pleasure!

HARALD

O waken now, Bödwild!
My loved, lamented child!

GUNNAR

Yes, waken now,
Bödwild! Beloved royal bride, awake!
Magic and sorcery holds thee fast asleep.

BÖDWILD

Thou wretched weakling, wretched fop, I sleep not.
Ne'er was my waking bliss fuller than now.

VELAND

See, when I grip her legs here, how she gnashes
her ivory teeth, seized with sweet fury!
See how her nostrils arch! And see what fire
shines sparkling from her eyes! Regard now:
soon she will whinny like a wild young colt!

Bödwild

Mount me! I'll carry thee wherever thou wilt!
Forward through heaven and hell I'll sweep with thee!

Veland

[*Breaking into insane laughter.*
Now Jarl, now King, are you contented, eh?
Have I told too much of my wedding now?

Gunnar

Knowest thou me, Bödwild? Bödwild, Bödwild, knowest thou me?

Harald

Thou art not Bödwild. my proud daughter, no—
that icy chaste looked down on every man
and sent them packing with thy lioness glance.

Veland

Yet she would lick my sores, should I desire it.
We'll make the trial now, if it's your pleasure.

Bödwild

Veland, thou shouldst do ill to me; I love thee,
and hate all those that have done ill to thee.

Harald

O thou, my daughter's empty mask,
filled by this churl with all his bitter gall,
away out of my sight, for thou dost shame her
whom the accursed smith compels thee now to ape.

Bödwild

Accursed be the curser!

HARALD

Bödwild, Bödwild, oh!
I am he, for I have heard in Veland's pit
these words spoken by a ghost that lyingly
mimics my daughter. Out, ye men!
Follow me! Give me light! Light! Air!

VELAND

A moment yet. See first my ardour cool
itself upon thy royal blood.

HARALD

Out! Give me light! Light! Air!

VELAND

Be still, ye dogs! No sound! And do not stir!
These puppies are content, this foppish pack:
not dead, stunned by the axe's heavy weight.
Veland I am again; I shake myself,
shake the small vermin from my hide, and now
it must be seen if my charms fail or not.

[*Deep darkness, then it clears. On the seat of honour at the table sits* KING HARALD, *rigid, as if struck with catalepsy. Only his eyes move. This remains so to the end. He does not speak again. Only now and then inarticulate groaning sounds of pain, horror, and so on, show that he hears and sees.* GUNNAR, *also seated at the table, finds himself in a similar state. Also* HARALD'S *men, some holding themselves painfully upright, some with their heads fallen among the dishes.* BÖDWILD *lies on her face.*

Veland *stands. He has wound her hair round one of his hands.*

Now, Jarl, thou knowest all; thou knowest all.
Now horror bursts the blood-veins in thy brain.
For my revenge, it's shown, thou art too small.
And yet, to satiate the insatiable
I dream: how can I stretch your vessel farther?
This was my goal: this tomblike stillness round me!
I freeze; I feel myself so lonely suddenly.
Pain, anguish, horror, even these
leave me now lone and null. Revenge remains.
Is't truly so? Does my revenge's dread
fury remain in me, with me? Yes, it remains—
but stunted, as I see! Yet it remains.
Has satiation, then, so weakened it?
Does that which it consumed not count as nourishment
that it whines on still like a hungry child?
I know not. Veland, look unto thyself,
lest thou thyself perchance might yet become
an offering to thy revenge. Beast-god, god-beast—
enough of this dark frenzy!
Now pause, now hearken in silence to thyself,
and see if something new comes there to birth.
Is't thou, Ketill? Is't thou? Out of the deeps
within my soul does there not break a note
of thy music now? It was not known to me
that I did call thee, shepherd. Through what magic
dost thou rise up in me, thou gentle one?
How dost thou dare it, followed by the sound
of thy young lambs? The whole herd patters round me
like a field. Thou leadest them to graze

into the flames of hell, my friend, into the vengeance
of the blood-drinker, sendest them into
a grove of dreadful pines. O can your shawm,
stilling the blood-stream. waken another stream,
the stream of tears, which yet can never quench
my hell, and streaming thither take with it
the best of my strength, making me bleed more swiftly
than if 'twas blood I wept?
The step of love, I know, is pitiless too.
Before him there's no help. And his flute's sound
makes brazen portals melt, snaps every bolt.

[Ketill's *shawm sounds nearer and nearer, until he appears himself.*

Ketill

Forgive me that I come here, busy smith.

Veland

Thou hast come here before and never sought excuse.

Ketill

I came when thou didst call to me in need.
Thou called'st me, Veland.

Veland

No, I called thee not.
How should I when at last is consummated
that which thou ne'er couldst grasp, Ketill?

Ketill

A shepherd knows the lamb's grief; the wolf's too.

VELAND

I am no more in need, no more, no more, Ketill.

KETILL

So hast thou often said, when bloody sweat
rained from thy forehead, and the pallid horror
spoke in thy eyes of the throbbing of thy wounds.

VELAND

I feel my wounds no longer: they are healed.

KETILL

His suffering is immortal who's immortal.

VELAND

Thou liest. I am immortal; my pain not.
It is dried up, swallowed in burning wastes.
The agony's over. Now I have become
a savage reveller, and I stuff my soul's paunch
with bloody morsels. My sweet cakes are filled
with human corpses. Before a father's eyes,
before King Harald's and the bridegroom's eyes,
I slaked my raging lust upon this woman,
this bride adorned with shame, that dog-like
will lick my foot that trod upon her face
when she arises from her swoon. Hear'st thou,
Harald?

KETILL

King, bear thy fate. Endure it patiently.
Enduring thou canst be a king as well
as in commanding.

VELAND

Yes, bear it in patience,

impotent fool, whose face speaks idiocy.
What I did to this girl will stay burned in,
dreadfully gnawing in thy mouldering brain,
even when thou art dead. Hear'st thou that,
Gunnar?

KETILL

Ye kings, ye suffer much, and to excess,
as once you sought to enjoy. Bear all
in lowliness.

VELAND

Yes, bear all that
which I have given in costly gifts till now,
and that, still sweeter, which I have kept back.
Ye turn your horror-stricken stare on Ketill.
Does he bring verdant willows on his back?
Look here on me, mark me now and attend.
I only have the food for all your senses.

KETILL

But thou thyself; what hinders thee from looking
upon me. O look on me, Veland. Who knows,
perhaps I bring a willow for thy soul's good.
Be still, look at me, and look in thyself!
And sniff the air then with thy nostrils, listen
with the lynx's ear; for not in vain I'm here,
but for a deep-thought reason.

VELAND

Let me be.
Art thou the ambassador of some strange power
that thwarts me, and would hinder my revenge?

KETILL

I sense another power that rather far

would free thee from this tomb, that hides so much
anguish and pain. would burst a gate for thee
through vaulted night to light and space. Revenge
cannot do this.

VELAND

Revenge can do all things!
Harald, dost thou hear that? Revenge can do
all things!
This pleasure I enjoyed did sicken me—
take heed, and lose no word—as if I had
coupled myself with a mangy animal.
I spit out even the memory of that deed.
I hate that loathsome and corrupted woman.
Scab! Take thyself from Veland's neighbour-
hood!
Flee! Or still better, a stone around thy neck,
and be with thee drowned all King Harald's
brood!—
Hark, what is that?

[VELAND *listens in terror.*

KETILL

Thou speakest too much
and dost not hear perchance the voice that falls
out of the air now. O sweet miracle
that thou canst scarce recall, thy blood pounds so
wildly within thy veins.

VELAND

I knew the marvel well,
else should such loathing seize me at the sight
of these, the offerings to my fury?

KETILL

As if swans flew, methinks, o'er Veland's isle.

VELAND

Such pinions no swan ever had, O simple herd.

KETILL

They beat loud over us and die away.

VELAND

So that is it, and thou think'st to deceive me,
impudent herd, with this, that, weakening me,
thou mightest steal my prey more safely from me!
That was not my loved child, Hervar the White,
King Hödver's daughter, and my lovely bride.
What should she seek here, the All-Father's darling,
in this forlorn Valhalla.

KETILL

Was she sent perchance
now to decide thy fight at last, Veland?

VELAND

She'll ne'er return who once lay on my breast,
and if she were to come what could I do
in my disgrace? With these my jaws which tore
two helpless boys I could howl up at her.

KETILL

O Veland, dreadful was their cry of woe.

VELAND

Thou liest now: they cried not; they were dumb.

KETILL

Veland, they cried, believe me, they cried loudly.
The All-Father heard the dreadful sound.

VELAND

I laugh,
at him! The All-Father hears not; he is deaf.
That he is deaf I, Veland. know. Trust thou my word.

KETILL

And yet he heard the boys' last dying cries.

VELAND

They did not cry.

KETILL

They cried aloud and they cry still.

VELAND

Then even so he heard naught further, herd,
than that sole tempest, that wind's howling, which
he raised himself at the world's first beginning.

KETILL

Smith, he can strike thee! Dreadful is his anger,
more dreadful still his power. Weigh what thou sayest.

VELAND

On me long since he's blunted all his weapons
and he may sling his hammer farther, for
the new blows will but harden me, like the old.
[*Lightning flashes.*

KETILL

That was his bolt, it flames within thy tomb.
Outside, hear'st thou, shakes thunder o'er the sea.

VELAND

What then? With fire I've always been acquainted.
For answer I can sling it up at him
out of the earth's deeps, where, a sea, it billows
in molten waves. And now, upon this instant,
Ketill, I feel what I have won at last
as highest prize of my long servitude,
two wings of fire, such as no god e'er had.
They itch already on my shoulders; soon,
O herd, the All-Father scorning, I will shoot
flashing through all the universe.

KETILL

And then?
What wilt thou do? Where wilt thou land, poor smith?

VELAND

What will I do? Good to all folk enslaved,
and evil to each one who lives upon
the vassal's bloody sweat, yea, the All-Father
and all his train!—Where shall I land?—There, where
our silent fate is woven, before which
the All-Father melts and thaws like a tiny drop
in torrid wastes—where he must pass away
even as I! There will I land, his like
wholly and truly.

KETILL

That is thy new freedom,
Veland?

VELAND

It is.

KETILL

Rebellion
that freed thee from King Harald's bitter service
now rears itself against the Heavenly Father's
splendour and kingship, which, still rich in blessing,
governs the world.

VELAND

He but makes the living
that he might kill, so long as he lives himself.
But he is not immortal.

KETILL

He is immortal, and omnipotent, too.
He'll bend thy neck anew beneath the yoke
if thou ask not his grace in humble prayer.

VELAND

Yes, pray for grace to one who called away
Hervar, and took her from me, and from my soul
tore that which bound me to his heavenly light!
The All-Father cheats poor servants with a day,
and under roses hides the murderous steel.

KETILL

How wilt thou miss his day, exiled in night
from now, and feel remorse and bitterness!

VELAND

I need his day no more; it charms me not,
and my transgression counts so little now
to me that no remorse seems small enough.
More likely I will send the carcasses
of these my offerings to him. There they are,
bleeding to death. Now let him well regard them:
he is another Harald, nothing more.
Hear'st thou this, Harald? And All-Father, thou?
And now behold thy sons' dead headless trunks.
Thus I return to thee thy well-loved sons.
Trust not the All-Father, for he lets this happen
in his malignity. But if it happened
without him or against his will, who's mightier?
Is't I or he?—Thou hear'st this: now hear more.
Not thou, nor the rack's pain, nor even revenge
restores me in this dreadful moment.
It is another thing I cannot name
to thee. Thou sittest palsied there and stupid
because it has come near thee. If it touches
a god perchance, he's lifted from his seat
with flying heels. Me it's touched differently.
It's freed my heavy feet, too, from the earth
and flings wide open distances for me
through universes never yet traversed.
And where the night is deepest, there I'll break in
with my own mighty wings of fire. I care not
for the All-Father's steady malice more.

KETILL

I'll tell thee where thou'lt land, smith, with thy wings
of fire; in hell's deep everlasting ground.

VELAND

Or else in nothingness, but ere that time
in many a star, of which in many a gem
I have had news, gems which I've broken and
smoothed
from the hot meteors. There will I see
what I have ne'er caught sight of here, at last
this earthly serfdom's ripe and fitting fruit;
fruit of the sweat, and of the godlike art,
which I have only used here in fool's service.—
Bödwild, stand up. I've wronged thee fearfully.
Yet now, at parting, as my spouse I greet thee,
who bearest in thy womb the child of one,
a suffering and ransomed god, that now
in thee renews his seed. And so bear thou my son.
I name him Wittig, and his coat of arms
will be the lightning. And this hero, Jarl,
will mount thy throne. And this exchange is good,
an undeserved, great happiness. For what,
compared to him, is thy brood, mowed down now—
him whose veins swell with the ardour of my fire.
Perchance he'll bear the lightning which will turn,
thou stammering All-Father, thy false day
to day at last.

[*An intolerable brightness bursts out, which casts everyone down, even* KETILL. VELAND *has vanished.*

BÖDWILD

O, Veland, Veland! Woe!
O take me with thee, take me with thee! Woe!

THE END

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